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ABSTRACT

With the improvement of U.S.-Soviet relations in recent years, there is much reason to take a fresh look at U.S. foreign policy. This unit provides secondary students with an opportunity to examine U.S. policy toward the Caribbean and Central America. Composed of four chapters, the first chapter examines the economic and military concerns that linked the history of the Caribbean and Central America to the United States. Chapter 2 explains how differences with Cuba became entangled with the larger U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the early 1960s and focuses upon the Cuban Missile Crisis. The third chapter examines the last three decades of U.S.-Soviet-Cuban relations. Finally, the unit concludes with a chapter on the future of U.S. policy toward the Caribbean and Central America. In this section, students are asked to reflect on what they learned and to choose one of three options for the future course of U.S. foreign relations toward the region. (DB)

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In the Shadow of the Cold War

The Caribbean and Central America in U.S. Foreign Policy

A Project of the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project
Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University

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In the Shadow of the Cold War

The Caribbean and Central America in U.S. Foreign Policy

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Introduction

The subject of U.S. foreign policy is especially timely in today's world. With the improvement of U.S.-Soviet relations in recent years, old assumptions about international affairs are giving way. The tensions that previously divided the world are rapidly crumbling. As a result, Americans have an opportunity to pause and take a fresh look at our country's foreign relations.

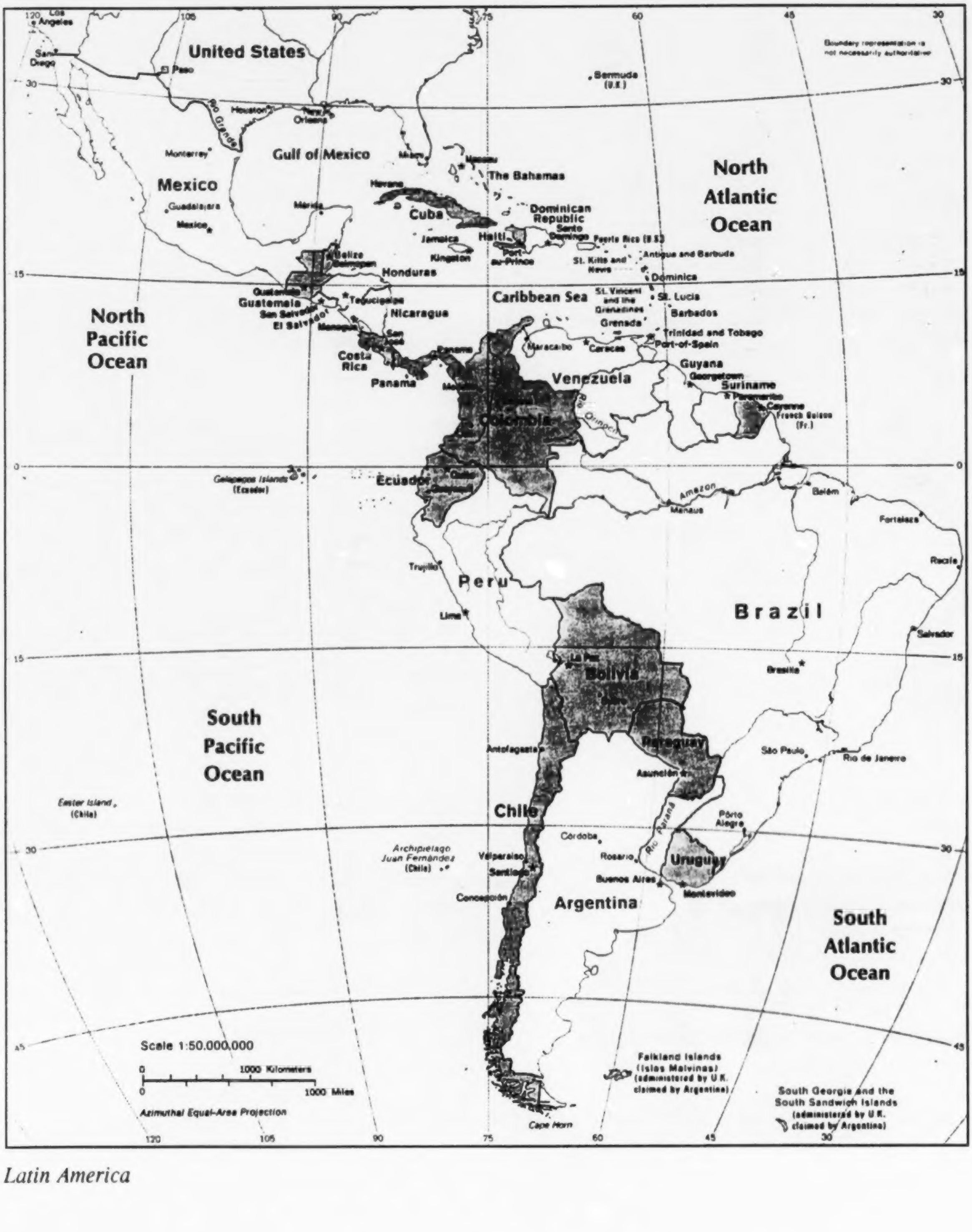
In many respects, U.S. policy toward the Caribbean and Central America serves as a good starting point for considering our country's future role in the world. Many of the United States' first steps in foreign affairs took place in the region. With the emergence of the United States as a superpower in the twentieth century, the Caribbean and Central America became a vital part of our country's global interests.

In this book, you will examine the economic and military concerns that linked the history of the Caribbean and Central America to the United States. As you will learn, most countries in this corner of the world were at one time colonies of Spain, although the British, French, and Dutch also controlled territories in the region. Even as independent states, the countries of the Caribbean and Central America have often been subject to outside forces. For the most part, the United States, the Soviet Union, Europe, and the larger nations of Latin America have determined the direction of the region.

The role of the United States in the Caribbean and Central America has been particularly significant since the late 1800s. Because of their small size and proximity to the United States, the countries of the region have found themselves swept up in the currents of American history. When Americans developed a taste for bananas, coffee, sugar, and other products of the tropics, American businessmen moved quickly to set up huge plantations in the Caribbean and Central America. When the needs of U.S. trade and defense required a shorter ocean route between the Atlantic and the Pacific, the United States took the lead in the construction of the Panama Canal in the early 1900s. And when Soviet expansion came to worry U.S. leaders after World War II, the United States provided large amounts of foreign aid to support friendly governments in the region.

This book will also explore U.S. relations with Cuba--the country to challenge most boldly U.S. domination of the Caribbean and Central America. Chapter 2 explains how our differences with Cuba became entangled with the larger U.S.-Soviet confrontation in the early 1960s. As you will discover, the conflict led to a tense diplomatic crisis that brought the world dangerously close to nuclear war. The day-by-day account of the crisis provides one of history's most dramatic examples of government leaders under pressure.

Finally, *In the Shadow of the Cold War* concludes with a chapter on the future of U.S. policy toward the Caribbean and Central America. In this section, you will be asked to bring together what you have learned from the past and form an opinion on the future course of our country's foreign relations toward the region. In a time of great international change, we as citizens have an important role to play in charting our country's course in the world. This book can help you join the debate on important issues facing the United States today.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Latin America

Chapter 1

U.S. Relations with the Caribbean and Central America

Introduction

Perhaps nowhere in the world have U.S. actions left a greater impact than in the region of the Caribbean and Central America. Nowhere else in the world have the histories of foreign countries been so closely tied to the decisions made in our nation's capital. The great size and strength of the United States have cast an enormous shadow over the small, struggling states in the Caribbean and Central America. Geography has made contact and interaction unavoidable, while differences in political and economic development have marked a clear boundary between the United States and its neighbors to the south. In miles, Washington is closer to the Central American capital of San Salvador than to San Francisco. In other ways, however, the two capital cities are worlds apart.

As the past has shown, our relations with Latin America in general have been marked by both the best and worst of American intentions. Simon Bolivar, the Venezuelan who liberated much of Spanish-speaking South America from Spain, foresaw this paradox early in the nineteenth century. "The United States," he predicted, "seems destined to plague us with miseries in the name of liberty."

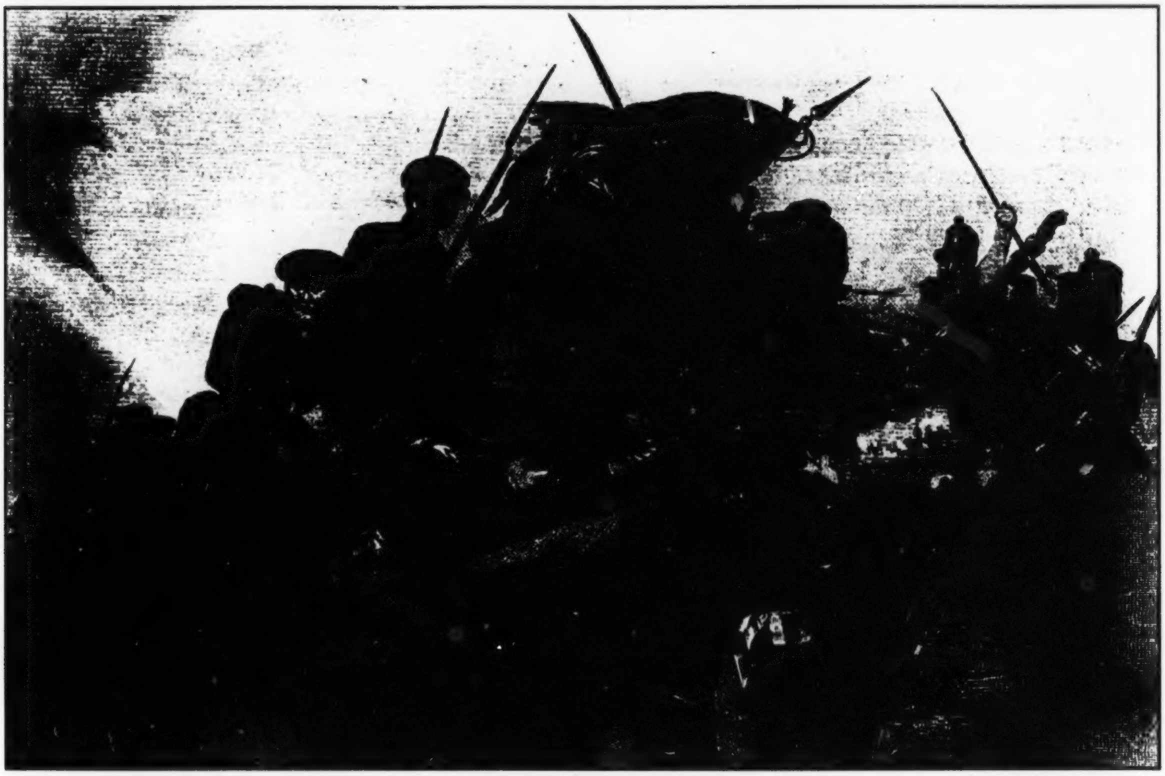
The Caribbean and Central America

European explorers first came into contact with the New World in the Caribbean and Central America. From the beginning, the encounter favored the Europeans. In Central America, the efforts of the Spanish empire to colonize the region met resistance from a well-organized society dominated by Mayan culture. By 1543, however, the Spanish had imposed control, uniting an area from what is today southern Mexico to Panama under a single jurisdiction. When the Spanish empire crumbled in Mexico and South America, the United Provinces of Central America was formed in 1823. This federation disintegrated by 1838, giving rise to the independent states of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. (Panama, another Central American country, broke away from Colombia in 1903.)

In the Caribbean, Spain overwhelmed the native populations in the 1500s. By the seventeenth century, however, other European powers challenged Spanish rule. The British, French, and Dutch each established colonies within the cluster of islands which stretches from the tip of Florida to the coast of Venezuela. Sugar cane became the most profitable crop of the islands, and African slaves were imported to work on huge plantations. Political independence came very slowly to the region. A successful slave revolt in Haiti defeated the French colonial powers in 1804, but for much of the Caribbean, independence was not achieved until the twentieth century. Unlike Mexico, many countries of the Caribbean and Central America have lacked a unifying sense of nationhood. Their small size and economic weakness have left them vulnerable to pressures from their larger neighbors, especially the United States.

Manifest Destiny

From the earliest days of the republic, Americans felt that the United States was a unique force for good in the world. Many believed that the values of American democracy and individual liberty were destined to sweep across the continent and perhaps the entire Western Hemisphere. Believers in Manifest Destiny, a term first coined in the 1840s by a New York journalist, held that the territorial expansion of the United States was part of God's plan to spread the American experiment in self-government.



U.S. troops confront Mexican forces in the Mexican-American War. **(National Archives)**

Manifest Destiny served as a guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy during the country's conflict with Mexico. In 1846, a dispute over the boundary of Texas led to the Mexican-American War. After U.S. forces captured Mexico City the following year, Mexico was forced to give up not only its claims to Texas but also territories that now comprise the American Southwest and California. This striking victory, however, was not enough for some in Washington. Twelve of fifty-two senators ultimately opposed the peace treaty with Mexico, arguing that the United States should annex the entire country.

By the mid-1800s, the present outlines of the United States had been filled in, except for Alaska and Hawaii. With expansion to the west closed, some Americans turned their attention to the Caribbean and Central America. This interest reflected the growing tension between the North and the South prior to the U.S. Civil War. Southerners hoped to expand the plantation system to Cuba and Nicaragua, and in the process strengthen their position against the North. Cuba was especially attractive to the South, since the economy was already dominated by sugar, coffee and tobacco plantations using the labor of African slaves. In 1854, President Franklin Pierce expressed the U.S. desire to obtain Cuba from Spain. Pierce's declaration, known as the Ostend Manifesto, asserted that the United States had a reasonable right to buy Cuba for a fair price or even use force if the offer were refused.

More dramatic than the Ostend Manifesto were the exploits of William Walker, a former newspaper editor and soldier of fortune. Walker assembled an army of fifty-eight men called the Phalanx of Immortals and sailed for Nicaragua in 1855. According to his own account, Walker aimed to help the forces of democracy in Nicaragua. Walker gained control of the government and invited other Americans to join his army. Veterans of the Mexican-American War, especially Southerners, responded enthusiastically when Walker offered to award them tracts of land. Walker soon had 2,500 men in arms. In 1856, he legalized slavery and declared English the official language.

Although some liberals in Central America had originally seen Walker as a positive force for change, his actions offended many regional leaders. They feared being overpowered by American influence. Central American countries banded together in 1857 to defeat Walker and forced him to return to the United States. He was executed three years later in Honduras after attempting to launch another military expedition.

The failure of Walker's grab for power in Nicaragua was a blow to the interests of the South. Many Southerners had hoped to first establish a plantation economy in Nicaragua and then expand the system to Cuba and other lands in the Caribbean and Central America. The *New Orleans Delta* went so far as to write, "The fate of Cuba depends upon the fate of Nicaragua, and the fate of the South depends upon that of Cuba. This is the hour of destiny."

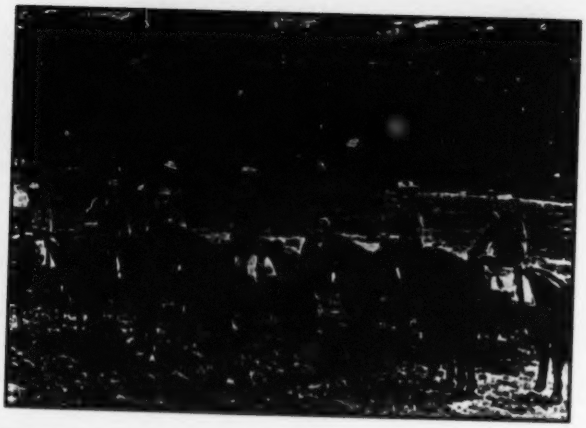
The Spanish-American War

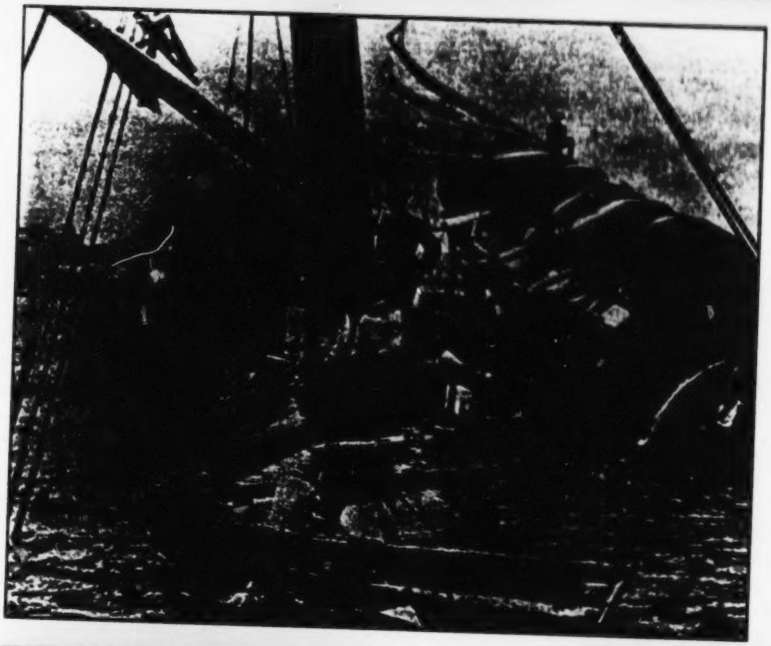
The victory of the North in the Civil War put an end to the South's plans of expansion and spurred on the emergence of the United States as an industrial giant. More than ever, Americans felt their country had a special mission to promote democratic values in the world. The late nineteenth century was also a time of fierce competition among the major powers of Europe. Their colonial empires in Asia and Africa required naval power to protect them. Great Britain maintained the largest navy during the 1800s, but Germany was rapidly closing the gap. In this atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion, Americans feared that the European nations would extend their struggle to the Western Hemisphere.

The Monroe Doctrine had long served as a warning for Europeans to stay out of the Americas. When it was originally proclaimed by President James Monroe in 1823, the United States depended on Britain to enforce the policy. By the end of the century, however, new British settlements in Central America and a boundary dispute between the British colony of Guiana and Venezuela raised U.S. concerns about British plans. Moreover, the French and Germans were also seeking to increase their influence in the Caribbean and Central America.

Among the colonial powers of Europe, though, Spain was the chief target of resentment for Americans. Not only did the Spanish rule Cuba and Puerto Rico with a heavy hand, but many Americans saw the Spanish monarchy as backward and corrupt. Cuban attempts to overthrow Spain's control had attracted widespread support among Americans during the nineteenth century. When a new revolt began in 1895, American sympathies again went out to the Cubans fighting for independence. These sentiments deepened when a Spanish army of 200,000 men set out to crush the rebellion in 1896. The Spanish attacked villages where support for the revolt was strong, and herded hundreds of thousands of peasants into fortified towns. They also burned crops and slaughtered thousands of farm animals in hopes of destroying the roots of the uprisng.

By 1898, the war in Cuba had stalemated. The Spaniards held the cities while the Cuban rebels controlled the countryside. Meanwhile, newspapers in the United States inflamed the public with details of Spanish brutality. "Blood on the roadsides, blood in the fields, blood on the doorsteps, blood, blood, blood," wrote the *New York World*. When the U.S. battleship *Maine* exploded mysteriously in Havana harbor in February, the press rushed to blame the Spanish. The mounting public pressure was too much for President William McKinley to resist. Even though Spain was ready to accept U.S. demands, he asked Congress to declare war.





Above left: *U.S. troops in Cuba firing on Spanish forces during the Spanish-American War.* (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

Above right: *Spanish cavalry on guard against Cuban rebels.* (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

Left: *U.S. sailors beside the mast of the* Maine *in Havana Harbor.* (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

Below: *U.S. soldiers recovering from yellow fever during the Spanish-American War. Disease killed ten times more Americans during the course of the war than Spanish arms.* (University of Miami Library)

Facing page: *Cuban rebels on horseback.* (University of Miami Library)

McKinley's war goals, however, differed from the popular call to intervene on the side of Cuban independence. McKinley believed that the United States should take military action to end the conflict and establish a stable government. Congress, meanwhile, feared that McKinley's real intent was to make Cuba a permanent U.S. possession. While giving President McKinley the authority to enter the war in 1898, Congress also passed an amendment requiring the United States to grant Cuba self-government once the Spanish colonial army was defeated.

The Spanish-American War lasted only four months and ended with a decisive victory for the United States. Spain and the United States concluded a peace treaty which turned over the Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, as well as Cuba, to U.S. control. As Americans quickly discovered, though, governing an empire was much more difficult than conquering one. Particularly in Cuba, the conclusion of the Spanish-American War failed to lay the foundation for a peaceful future. Many Cubans had already invested thirty years of their lives into the independence movement when U.S. troops arrived in 1898. Their struggle had united supporters of independence throughout the island. As might be expected, these Cuban nationalists were deeply disappointed when the United States negotiated an end to Spanish rule without their participation. Many felt they had merely traded one colonial power for another.

The U.S. military occupation of Cuba began in 1899. From the beginning, Americans brought their advanced technology and administrative expertise to the island. Roads and telegraph lines were built, finances reorganized, schools opened, sanitation was improved, and yellow fever stamped out. The United States provided benefits the Cubans could not provide for themselves. At the same time, however, U.S. officials sought to mold a political system that would closely follow Washington's guidance. Voting rights were given to only five percent of Cuba's population. Even with these restrictions, elections in 1900 produced an assembly that strongly favored immediate independence for Cuba. The McKinley Administration now found itself in a quandary. Policymakers in the White House wanted to protect American business and security interests in Cuba, but the American public expected Washington to establish a strong democratic government on the island.

U.S. concerns about the future of Cuba were ultimately settled, but in Washington rather than Cuba. Under a plan crafted largely by the U.S. State Department, Cuba would receive independence only after accepting a number of limitations. The plan, which came to be known as the Platt Amendment, gave the United States the right to oversee the Cuban economy, veto international commitments, and intervene whenever necessary "for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty." The United States was also allowed to build a naval base on the southeastern tip of the island at Guantanamo Bay. News of the proposed amendment sparked angry demonstrations and protests in Cuba, but the McKinley Administration insisted that the Platt Amendment was the price Cubans would have to pay for ending the U.S. military occupation of their island. In 1901, the amendment passed the Cuban assembly by one vote.

The Platt Amendment opened the door to greater American investment in Cuba's economy. By 1928, American companies produced seventy-five percent of Cuba's sugar--the island's leading crop. Cubans who had fought in the independence struggle found few opportunities in an economy dominated by Americans and recent immigrants from Spain. They came to resent the alliance between foreign businesses and wealthy Cuban plantation owners. Their frustration would later emerge as a powerful force in Cuban politics.

U.S. Exerts Influence

The American experience in Cuba proved to be the first of many involvements in the Caribbean and Central America. Among the boldest was the construction of the Panama Canal. Interest in a canal across the isthmus of Central America had steadily grown since the United States had expanded across the continent to the Pacific Ocean in 1848. Events during the Spanish-American War had demonstrated the military importance of a canal. For example, the U.S. cruiser *Oregon* took nearly ten weeks to round Cape Horn and join the battle against the Spanish navy.

Nicaragua had originally seemed the most likely site for the canal. When President Theodore Roosevelt came to the White House in 1901, though, he was attracted to a failed canal project in Panama that a French company had begun in 1880. Roosevelt paid $40 million in 1902 for the canal rights and then sought to lease land in Panama, which at that time was a province of Colombia. The Colombian Senate, however, turned down Roosevelt's offer of $10 million in cash and $250,000 in annual rent. This snag in the canal project angered not only Roosevelt, but also officials of the French company and Panamanian leaders. The three parties joined forces to revolt against Colombian rule. Panamanians seized power in the province, an official of the French canal company drafted a constitution, and the United States immediately recognized the new government, placing it under the protection of ten U.S. gunboats. Congress later questioned the U.S. role in the Panamanian revolution, but work on the canal proceeded until its completion in 1914. President Theodore Roosevelt even boasted, "I took the Canal Zone and let Congress debate...and while the debate goes on, the canal does also."

The Panama Canal drew even greater American attention to the Caribbean and Central America. The region became both an area of vital national interest and a testing ground for an experiment in cultivating American values. As American economic and military power increased in the first decades of the 1900s, the United States more and more came to view the Caribbean and Central America as its own back yard. In practical terms, that meant Americans found themselves playing a larger role in the affairs of the region.

Theodore Roosevelt laid the political foundation for increased U.S. involvement during his State of the Union address to Congress in 1904. In what came to be known as the Roosevelt Corollary, he warned that the United States would act as an "international police power" to maintain stability in the Western Hemisphere. Roosevelt soon put his pledge into practice, sending U.S. troops to Cuba in 1906 after supporters of the Cuban Liberal political party rose up in opposition to the re-election of the Conservative president.

World War I raised new concerns about the security of the Caribbean and Central America. The commander of the U.S. Marines Corps was convinced that Germany had provoked chaos in Haiti and Santo Domingo (now the Dominican Republic) in order to set up military bases on the island. President Woodrow Wilson ordered troops into the two countries in 1914 and 1916 respectively. Haiti became a U.S. protectorate[1], while a U.S. military government was installed in Santo Domingo.

U.S. involvement in Nicaragua left a lasting impact on that country. Originally, U.S. troops landed in 1910 to back a pro-U.S. government. The force soon grew to 3,000 soldiers, and the Nicaraguan government increasingly came under the management of U.S. experts and advisers. Opponents of U.S. domination in Nicaragua

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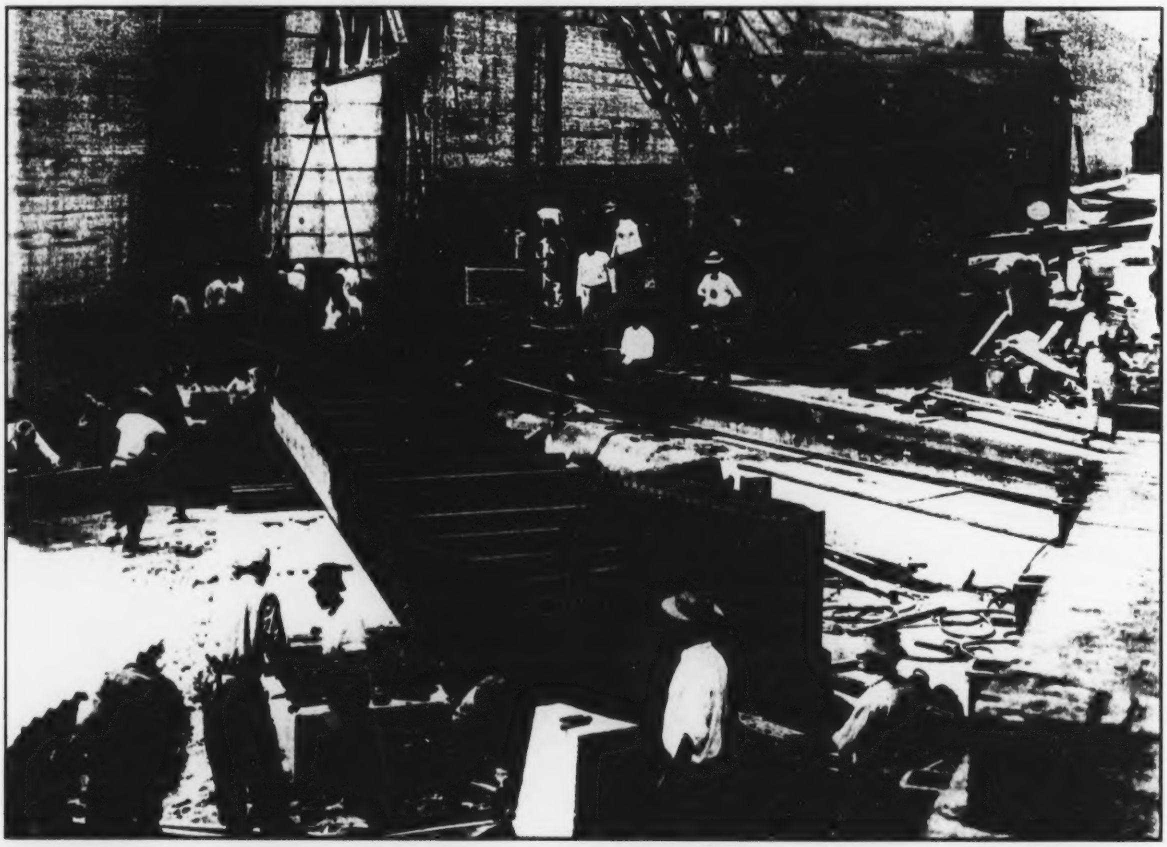
[1] A protectorate is a country that is watched over and partly controlled by a stronger one.

U.S. Marines aboard a train in Nicaragua in 1912. **(National Archives)**



Construction of the Panama Canal nearing completion in 1915. **(National Archives)** turned to guerrilla warfare by 1927. The United States committed 6,000 soldiers against a small rebel army led by Augusto César Sandino, and eighteen U.S. warplanes conducted history's first dive-bombing attacks. The guerrillas, however, moved too quickly and the terrain proved too difficult for the Americans to gain a decisive victory. Frustrated, the United States withdrew its forces in 1933. Before leaving, though, the Americans set up the Nicaraguan National Guard to police the country. The force soon became the private army of its commander, Anastasio Somoza. In 1934, Somoza lured Sandino to a meeting in Nicaragua's capital with a promise of peace talks, and then assassinated him. By 1937, he had toppled Nicaragua's elected leader and installed himself as president. With control of the National Guard, Somoza intimidated his opponents and built the framework of a family dynasty that ran Nicaragua until 1979.

Economic Giant

The American presence in the Caribbean and Central America during the early 1900s was actually more economic than military. The United Fruit Company, operating banana plantations throughout the region, became the largest agricultural enterprise in the world. Along with its rival, Standard Fruit, the company built highways, railroads, ports, and communications facilities. Schools, hospitals, and housing were constructed for the workers. In Cuba, for example, sixty percent of the property in the countryside belonged to Americans by 1905. At one United Fruit plantation there, even the post office and twenty armed soldiers were based on company land.

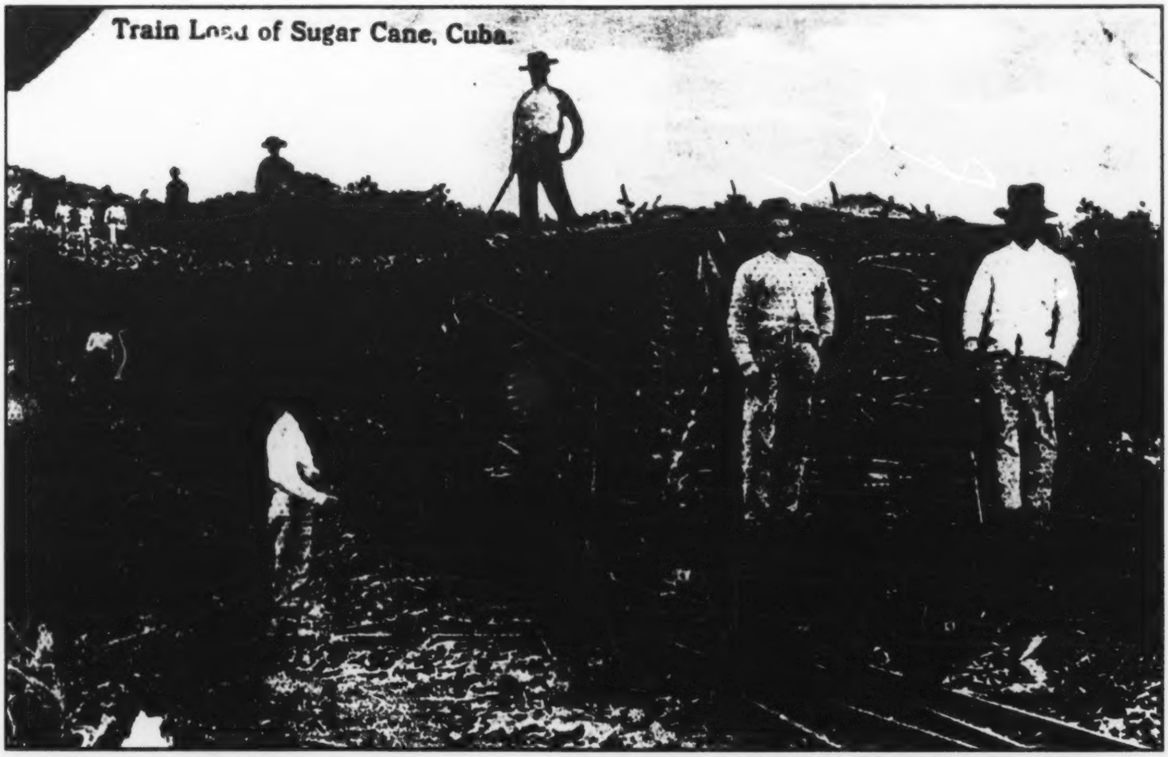
As U.S. power in the Caribbean and Central America grew during the early 1900s, people of the region and U.S. observers weighed the positive and negative consequences of the U.S. role. On the one hand, American businesses linked the economies of the area to the outside world, boosted the production of export crops, and created thousands of jobs. Transportation and communication improvements opened up new possibilities for development. Meanwhile, representatives of the U.S. government worked toward establishing sound financial institutions and orderly democracies.

On the other hand, the dominance of the United

United Fruit Company

The story of the United Fruit Company is intertwined with the history of Central America and the Caribbean. The company has its origins in the late 1800s, a time when leaders of the region were seeking to create new economic links with the outside world. In Costa Rica, the government offered an American businessman, Minor Keith, 800,000 acres to build a railroad from the capital to the Atlantic Ocean. Keith planted bananas on much of his land, and joined with another trading firm to form the United Fruit Company in 1899. United Fruit set the pace in the construction of railroads and port facilities up and down the Caribbean coast of Central America. The company also helped governments control tropical diseases.

Progress, however, came with a pricetag. United Fruit soon became known as "The Octopus" for its domination of many countries in Central America and the Caribbean. By the 1920s, the company not only controlled the rail system, ports, and communications of the region, but also played an important role in political affairs. In Honduras, for example, presidents could not be elected without United Fruit support, while in Guatemala the government relied on the company for loans. During the 1970s, banana-producing countries tried to assert their economic independence. They complained that exporting countries received only seventeen cents of every dollar spent on bananas and demanded a greater share of the profits. United Brands (the successor of United Fruit) joined with other exporting giants, however, in threatening to close down their operations. Countries in the region recognized that they could not afford to lose markets for their products in North America. The emergence of new industries in the Caribbean and Central America has loosened the economic hold of United Brands over the region, but the company remains a powerful force.


Train Load of Sugar Cane, Cuba.

A trainload of sugar cane in Cuba around the turn of the century. **(University of Miami Library)**

States in the region often smothered local initiative. In Honduras, for example, an American commanded the army and the U.S. dollar was legal currency. Throughout the Caribbean and Central America, American companies meddled in local politics and relied on the U.S. military to support their interests. Economic development also had a bad side. In the case of Central America, most of the highways and railroads connected the plantations to Caribbean ports, but did not serve national capitals. The emphasis on export crops left countries dependent on a single product. During the Depression, for example, a fall in the price of Cuban sugar from twenty-two cents a pound to half a cent pushed millions of Cubans into desperate poverty.

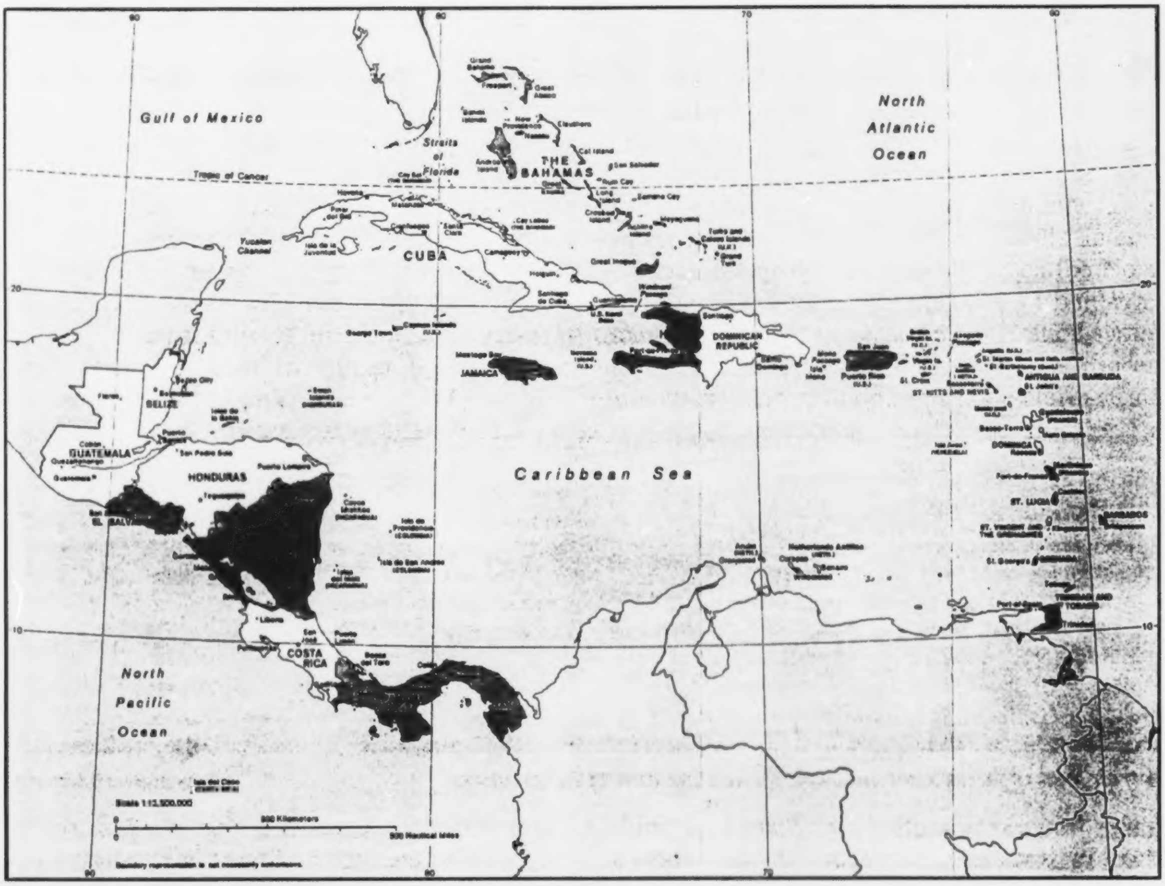
President Franklin D. Roosevelt brought changes to U.S. relations with Latin America. Under his Good Neighbor Policy, Roosevelt repealed the Platt Amendment, offered government loans to Latin American countries, and pledged not to intervene in the region. The policy withstood a major challenge in 1938, when Mexico took over the property of American oil companies in the country. Despite pressure from business interests to send in troops, Roosevelt negotiated a settlement with Mexico that provided payment to the oil companies.

To Think About

1. How did Manifest Destiny shape U.S. involvement in Latin America?

2. What were the different forces that led the United States to declare war on Spain?

3. What were the effects of U.S. involvement in the Caribbean and Central America during the early part of this century?


Gulf of Mexico
Tropic of Cancer
Straits of Florida
THE BAHAMAS
North Atlantic Ocean
Yucatan Channel
CUBA
JAMAICA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
BELIZE
GUATEMALA
HONDURAS
Caribbean Sea
COSTA RICA
North Pacific Ocean
ST. LUCIA
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
DOMINICA
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
BARBADOS

The Caribbean and Central America.

Cold War Tensions

The conclusion of World War II in 1945 left the United States the most powerful country on earth. No fighting had taken place on American soil, and the United States possessed the world's first atomic weapons. The Soviet Union, however, soon emerged as a significant threat. Despite losing twenty million people during the war, the Soviets swept through Eastern Europe on their way to victory over the Nazis, and possessed the largest army in the world.

The U.S.-Soviet alliance against Nazi Germany quickly dissolved after the war ended. The Soviet Union maintained control of Eastern Europe by installing communist governments in those countries. U.S. leaders accused the Soviets of breaking the promise they had made during the war to hold democratic elections in Eastern Europe. The United States feared that the Soviets, with their immense army in Europe, would attempt to take over the entire continent. This Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union spilled over into every area of U.S. foreign policy, including our dealings with the Caribbean and Central America. Containing the influence of the Soviet Union and the spread of communism became the top priority of the United States. Many U.S. experts feared that a communist regime anywhere in the Western Hemisphere would set off a chain reaction, toppling governments friendly to the United States one after the other. According to this "domino theory," communism could eventually reach our border with Mexico.

The struggle with the Soviets caused the United States to be more concerned about stability in the Caribbean and Central America than democratic reform. The first example of U.S. Cold War policy in the region came in 1947 when the president of Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza, refused to honor election results in his country. Instead, Somoza had reclaimed power with the help of the Nicaraguan National Guard. For a few months, President Harry S. Truman denied Somoza's regime official recognition, but in the end the United States resumed close relations with Nicaragua. U.S. leaders believed it more important for Somoza to be anti-communist than democratic.

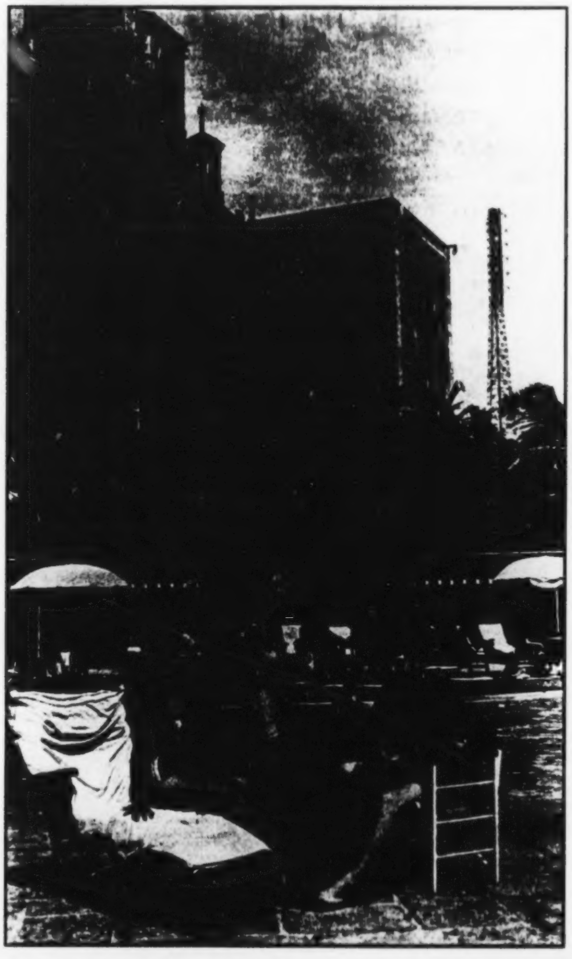
That same year, the United States unified the Western Hemisphere in a mutual defense treaty known as the Rio Pact. The agreement called on the countries of Latin America to come to the aid of a neighbor under attack. The Rio Pact was one of Washington's first steps designed to enlist Latin America on the U.S. side in the Cold War. In 1948, Washington took the lead in forming the Organization of American States (OAS) to further strengthen alliances within the Western Hemisphere. The United States also signed military treaties with ten different countries in the region. Under these agreements, the United States supplied equipment and training to armies in Latin America, and the governments pledged to reduce trade with the Soviet bloc.

Cold War tensions only intensified during the 1950s. U.S. troops fought against communism in Korea from 1950 to 1953, eventually settling for the division of North and South Korea that persists today. More disturbing was the successful test of a hydrogen bomb by the Soviet Union in 1953, only one year after the United States completed its own. At the same time, both sides were working frantically to develop long-range missiles to deliver their atomic weapons. Closer to home, the United States saw another threat to its security in Guatemala. Since 1950, Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz had been pursuing an economic reform program. His government had confiscated the unplanted fields of large landowners, and divided the land among 100,000 peasant families. The United Fruit Company lost land under the reform, and claimed Arbenz was a communist sympathizer. The United States grew particularly concerned when Guatemala received a shipment of weapons from communist

The Organization of American States meeting in 1961. **(Library of Congress)**

Czechoslovakia in 1954. Many U.S. policymakers feared that the Soviets were courting Guatemala to gain a foothold in Central America, and would eventually expand throughout the region.

In response, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) began a secret operation to overthrow the Arbenz government. A few hundred Guatemalan exiles were given military training at a base in neighboring Honduras. Pilots were paid to conduct bombing raids on the Guatemalan capital to undermine the government's resolve. Meanwhile, CIA radio broadcasts convinced Arbenz that a huge rebel force was preparing to invade. In less than two months, the CIA campaign forced Arbenz to flee the country. An army colonel friendly to the United States, Carlos Castillo, replaced him in 1954.



American tourists enjoy the sun at a Havana hotel in the 1950s. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

Castillo returned the land of the United Fruit Company and signed a defense pact with the United States. From Washington's point of view, the overthrow of Arbenz had succeeded in removing a potentially troublesome regime. For Guatemala, however, the events of 1954 only deepened the country's divisions. Castillo himself was assassinated in 1957. In the years that followed, large landowners increasingly turned to the military to crush calls for land reform. By the 1960s, paramilitary squads were killing thousands of peasants, mostly Indians, in a desperate attempt to maintain the status quo. Within Latin America, the United States received much of the blame for Guatemala's plight.

Cuban Revolution Challenges U.S. Power

U.S. worries in the Caribbean and Central America, however, did not end with Arbenz. On the contrary, Cuba was an even bigger concern in the 1950s. Politically, Cuba had been fairly stable since Fulgencio Batista seized power from a reform-minded government in 1934. Washington supported Batista as a strongman who would maintain order on the island and not upset U.S. interests. Cuba remained close to the United States, even after Batista's defeat in elections in 1944. At the same time, though, official corruption and graft were mounting. Hope for reform suffered a setback when Batista staged a coup to take power in 1952. Few Cubans expected the Batista regime to tolerate democratic change in their country. As a result, resentment against the government built up during the 1950s.

For most Americans, however, Cuba was known best as a glamorous resort. A boom in tourism to the island began in the 1920s and reshaped Cuba's image. For many Americans, Cuba was associated with casinos, nightclubs, and tropical beaches. American money helped provide Havana with more Cadillacs per capita than any city in the world during the 1950s. But the wealth also brought problems to Cuba. By the 1950s, American organized crime was firmly established on the island, along with drugs and prostitution. Economically, Cuba could claim one of the highest per capita incomes in Latin America. In reality, however, many Cubans could not find full-time employment, especially in the countryside. Meanwhile, many middle-class Cubans depended on expensive imports from the United States to maintain their lifestyle. By this standard, Cubans were far poorer than their American neighbors, and were suffering greatly from rising inflation. Prospects for the future were not reassuring either. Cuba in the 1950s relied more than ever on the export of sugar. Price increases in the 1940s had brought prosperity to the island but, by the same token, the ups and downs of the sugar market in the 1950s badly shook the economy.

Opposition to Batista developed gradually in the 1950s. Most Cuban political parties gave up on the democratic process when Batista rigged elections in 1954. The next year, student demonstrations were broken up by the police and army. Seeing few alternatives, some opponents of Batista turned to armed struggle for results. One of the most noteworthy was a young lawyer named Fidel Castro. The son of a Spanish immigrant who rose from poverty to become a wealthy landowner, Castro attended some of Cuba's top schools. Tall and athletic, he was even offered $5,000 by the New York Giants to play professional baseball in the United States. Castro's true interest, however, was politics.

Castro first captured public attention with an almost suicidal attack on an army base in 1953. Castro hoped that a dramatic blow against the Batista regime would spark an insurrection throughout Cuba. The assault, however, failed to set off a larger uprising. Instead, most of Castro's nearly 200 followers were killed, and Castro himself was jailed for two years. In 1956, Castro and eighty fellow revolutionaries launched another attack against Batista, sailing a small yacht from Mexico to Cuba. Most were killed by Batista's forces before reaching shore. Without arms or supplies, the eighteen survivors of the landing straggled into Cuba's isolated eastern mountains. Far from the center of power, Castro began his guerrilla war by attacking outposts of the unpopular Rural Guard. Thousands of landless peasants joined the struggle against Batista in 1957 and 1958, especially after the government forced many villagers into military camps.

At the same time that Castro's movement was gathering strength in the countryside, other

Since the early 1900s, the United States has maintained a naval base at Guantanamo Bay on the strategic southeastern tip of Cuba. (Historical Association of Southern Florida) opponents of Batista disrupted life in the cities. Government offices were bombed, power lines cut, and trains derailed. Batista responded with still greater violence and repression against those who challenged his rule. By 1958, even factions in the military and police were turning against him. In February of that year, Catholic bishops in Cuba called for a new government. Batista's human rights violations also turned American opinion against him, and led the United States to halt arms deliveries to Cuba in March. Facing opposition from almost every direction, Batista had little hope for survival. On January 1, 1959, he resigned and fled the country. Castro's forces quickly assumed the leadership of the revolutionary movement and on January 8, Castro entered Havana in triumph.

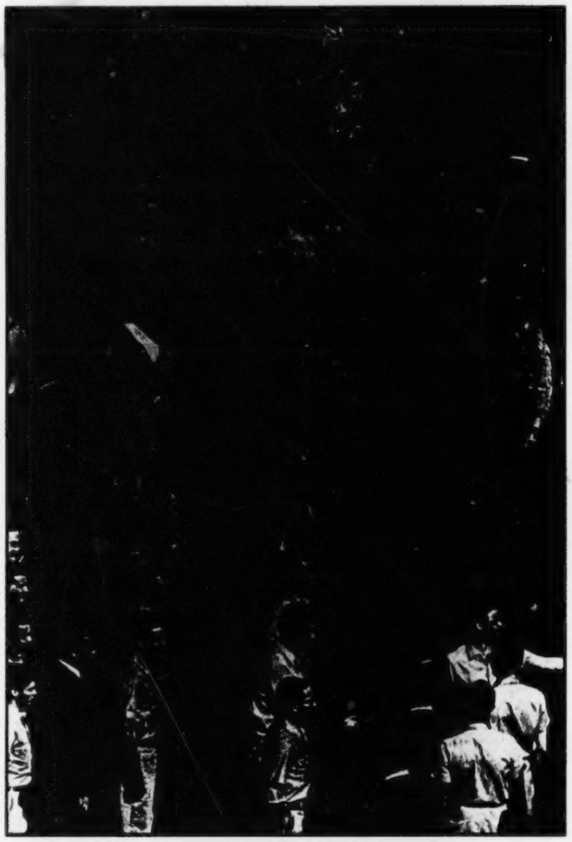
Most Americans, even government officials, welcomed the revolution in Cuba. Castro was seen as a brave nationalist and his movement was expected to place Cuba along the path of democratic reform. In April 1959, Castro visited the United States at the invitation of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. He spoke at Harvard and Princeton, met with CIA officials, and was praised by the American press. In fact, however, Castro's policies were on a collision course with U.S. interests. From early in his political career, Castro loudly opposed foreign domination of Cuba's economy. The United States was the inevitable target of his protests. Before coming to the United States, Castro had criticized Washington for supporting the Batista regime.

As Castro's grip on power strengthened during 1959, his revolution became more worrisome for U.S. policymakers. His agrarian reform program put half the land of Cuba under state control and prohibited foreign ownership. Moderate voices in the government were gradually replaced or forced to leave the country. By the end of 1960, Castro had taken over major businesses on the island, both foreign and domestic. At the same time, Cuba was developing new ties with the Soviet Union. In February 1960, the Soviets

Washington vs. Havana

Much of the conflict between the United States and Cuba in the early 1960s took place far away from public view. In fact, both sides expanded their secret activities after a U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba was repulsed at the Bay of Pigs. In the United States, President John F. Kennedy approved a new campaign in the fall of 1961 to overthrow the Castro regime. Classified as Operation Mongoose, the effort was directed by the CIA. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy summarized the intent of the plan: "My idea is to stir things up on the island with espionage, sabotage, general disorder, run and operated by Cubans themselves." Under Operation Mongoose, the CIA and Cuban exiles worked to undermine the Cuban economy and focus popular anger against the Castro government. At the same time, some agents seemed to have gone beyond their authority and tried to enlist organized crime leaders in a plot to assassinate Castro. One failed scheme centered on poison pills which were smuggled into the kitchen of a hotel cafeteria where Castro often ate. Other plans were even more far-fetched. These ideas featured deadly bacteria imbedded in Castro's skin-diving suit and favorite cigars, a seashell packed with explosives, and a pen firing poisoned darts.

Castro's strategy against Washington took a different approach. Rather than striking directly against the United States, Castro jabbed at U.S. allies in Latin America. Until 1961, propaganda served as Cuba's most important weapon. Castro stressed the need for revolution throughout the Western Hemisphere and, in the Declaration of Havana, claimed that the United States was blocking progress in the region. In 1961, however, Cuba began giving revolutionary movements more active support. A training school for guerrillas was established and Cuban military advisers were sent to aid rebels in Guatemala. By 1963, much of Castro's energy was aimed at bringing down the democratic government of Rómulo Betancourt in Venezuela. Cuba shipped arms to communist guerrillas there in hopes of disrupting free elections. According to Castro, Cuba was only defending its revolution against the United States. In 1964, he told an American reporter, "Of course we engage in subversion, the training of guerrillas, propaganda! Why not? This is exactly what you are doing to us."



President Kennedy (foreground) greets returning prisoners of war from the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

agreed to import sugar from Cuba and give Castro $100 million in credits to buy industrial equipment. Cuba also began purchasing weapons from communist countries.

For their part, Americans felt betrayed by Castro's actions. According to the U.S. viewpoint, the United States had aided the struggle to overthrow Batista. Moreover, most Americans believed that their country had played a positive role in Cuba during the twentieth century, first ensuring Cuban independence and then investing in the economic development of the island. Castro's nationalization of American businesses was seen as a slap in the face not only to U.S. interests in Cuba but to Washington's overall policy in Latin America. Even more provocative was Castro's friendliness with the United States' Cold War enemy, the Soviet Union.

By April 1960, many U.S. policymakers believed that Castro had to be removed. Officially, the United States refused to buy Cuban sugar in July 1960, and three months later barred exports of most American products to the island. In January 1961, the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba after Castro insisted that the staff at the U.S. embassy in Havana be reduced. Meanwhile, the United States launched a secret campaign to undermine Castro. The confrontation escalated to the point that the United States sponsored an invasion of Cuba by 1,400 Cuban exiles in April 1961. The attack brigade, trained by the CIA and launched in a flotilla of run-down boats from Guatemala, was designed to establish a beachhead in southern Cuba and set off a popular revolt against Castro. Instead, the invaders at the Bay of Pigs were met by 35,000 Cuban troops and completely defeated within three days.

The Bay of Pigs was a serious international embarrassment for the new administration of President John F. Kennedy. The failure was also a symbol of the changing relationship between the United States and Latin America. Cuba was more than a challenge to U.S. power in the region. Castro's revolution was a rejection of our country's efforts to bring American skills and values to the Caribbean and Central America. The U.S. role in the world seemed to be under attack. The fact that Castro was replacing the U.S. presence in Cuba with Soviet influence added another, more dangerous, dimension to the conflict. By 1961, Cuba indeed had become a flashpoint for American anxiety about the world. The crisis that came the following year proved that those concerns were well-founded.

To Think About

1. How did the Cold War influence U.S. policy in the Caribbean and Central America?

2. What factors led to the fall of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba?

3. Why did U.S.-Cuban relations turn hostile soon after Fidel Castro came to power?

Timeline of U.S. Involvement in the Caribbean and Central America

1823--In the Monroe Doctrine, President James Monroe announces that the United States will oppose further attempts by the European powers to establish colonies or intervene in the political affairs of countries in the Western Hemisphere.

1848--U.S. victory in the Mexican-American War forces Mexico to cede half of its territory to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

1850--The United States and Great Britain sign the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, stating that the two countries will share control of any future canal route through Central America. A treaty in 1901, however, allows the United States to build a canal through the region alone.

1854--The United States declares the Ostend Manifesto, communicating to Spain, France, and Britain its desire to purchase Cuba from Spain for a fair price. The United States claims the right to use force to acquire Cuba for the sake of the ''internal peace and existence'' of the Federal Union if the offer is refused.

1855--The Panamanian Railway, built by an American company, is opened. The railroad facilitates transportation between the east and west coasts of the United States, and boosts trade for Central American ports on the Pacific Ocean.

1857--William Walker's forces are defeated by the combined armies of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Walker had gained power in Nicaragua two years earlier.

1878--The first major rebellion in Cuba ends, as the Spanish maintain control after ten years of bitter fighting.

1889--The French Panama Canal Company abandons its efforts to connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The same year, an American firm is established to study the possibility of building a trans-oceanic canal through Nicaragua.

1895--Rebels in Cuba launch a second revolt against Spanish rule. American newspapers generate widespread public sympathy for the cause of Cuban independence.

1898--The United States gains Spanish colonial possessions in the Caribbean and the Pacific after a decisive victory in the Spanish-American War.

1901--In the Platt Amendment, the United States grants Cuba independence after Cuban leaders accept U.S. supervision of the island's foreign policy and economy.

1903--Rebels in Panama gain independence from Colombia with the support of U.S. warships. The new Panamanian government signs a treaty allowing the United States to build a canal through the country.

1904--In the Roosevelt Corollary, President Theodore Roosevelt justifies the right of the United States to intervene in the affairs of countries in the Western Hemisphere as necessary to maintain order.

1914--The Panama Canal opens, linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

1927--U.S. forces in Nicaragua are increased to 6,000 men to fight a guerrilla army.

1933--The United States pursues the Good Neighbor Policy toward Latin America, withdrawing forces from Nicaragua, and repealing the Platt Amendment the following year.

1934--With U.S. backing, Fulgencio Batista, a sergeant in the Cuban army, takes power in Cuba.

1947--The United States takes the lead in organizing the Rio Pact, a mutual defense treaty for the countries of the Western Hemisphere.

1954--The Organization of American States issues a "declaration of solidarity" in opposition to communist intervention in the Western Hemisphere.

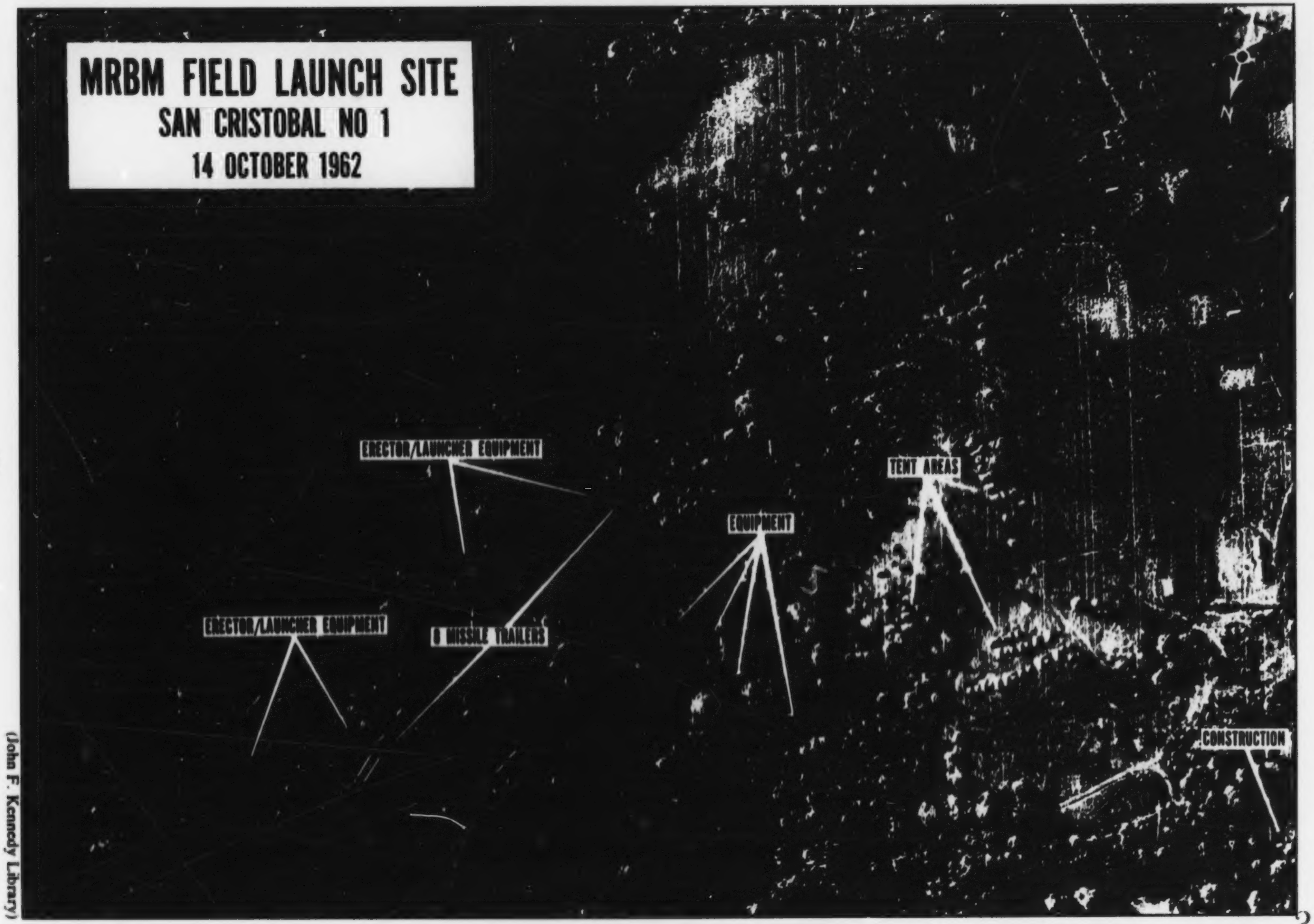
1954--A secret U.S. operation succeeds in forcing Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz from power.

1958--The United States halts arms shipments to Cuba in response to the repressive measures of Batista.

1959--After coming to power in Cuba, Fidel Castro launches a land reform campaign that is seen as a threat by American-owned businesses.

1960--Castro establishes economic and military ties to the Soviet Union. The United States counters by refusing to buy sugar from Cuba.

1961--Castro's forces defeat a U.S.-sponsored invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs.


MRBM FIELD LAUNCH SITE
SAN CRISTOBAL NO 1
14 OCTOBER 1962
ERECTOR/LAUNCHER EQUIPMENT
TENT AREAS
EQUIPMENT
ERECTOR/LAUNCHER EQUIPMENT
8 MISSILE TRAILERS
CONSTRUCTION
N

(John F. Kennedy Library)

Chapter 2

The Cuban Missile Crisis: Thirteen Days on the Brink

Introduction

On October 14, 1962, an American U-2 reconnaissance aircraft flew over the province of San Cristobal in Cuba on a routine mission to gather data. The pictures the aircraft took of the ground, however, disclosed developments that were far from routine. The photos revealed Soviet efforts to install approximately forty nuclear missiles, each capable of devastating an American city. Since Cuban leader Fidel Castro's first appeals to Moscow in 1960, the White House had repeatedly warned the Soviets against attempting to put missiles in Cuba. The Soviets had assured the United States that they had no intention of giving the Cubans nuclear missiles. They pledged that Cuba would receive only non-nuclear weapons to defend the island from attack.

Faced with evidence that nuclear missiles had indeed been sent to Cuba, U.S. leaders demanded that the Soviet Union immediately remove the missiles. The Soviets and the Cubans refused to comply, and war between the superpowers appeared imminent. The thirteen-day crisis that began when the reconnaissance photos were examined on October 15 was the most explosive confrontation in the Cold War. It is known to Americans as "the Cuban missile crisis," to Soviets as "the Caribbean crisis," and to Cubans as "the October crisis." At no other time in history has U.S. policy in the Caribbean and Central America become so dangerously entangled with U.S.-Soviet relations.

This crisis offers many insights and lessons about how the superpowers interact with each other and with smaller countries, how leaders make important decisions, and how the fear of nuclear war influences foreign policy. The crisis also illustrates the misunderstanding that separated the heads of government in the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. Misperceptions accounted for much of the tension and fear felt by policymakers in all three countries at the time of the crisis. As you read through this chapter, weigh carefully the decisions that were made by the various leaders as the crisis unfolded. What options did they have? Where might each option have led? Which historical lessons influenced their decisions? Would you have decided differently if you had been in their shoes at the time?

***Facing page:** U.S. experts first learned of Soviet missile installations in Cuba by examining this reconnaissance photograph. The eight missile trailers indicated that the Soviets were working to place missiles capable of reaching the United States on the island.*

Prelude to the Crisis

The failure of the U.S.-sponsored landing at the Bay of Pigs in 1961 convinced Fidel Castro that the United States would soon make another, more forceful, attempt to attack Cuba. Next time, he assumed, U.S. troops would lead the invasion. As a result, Castro believed that he needed to strengthen Cuba's defenses. To protect Cuba from the might of the United States, Castro felt he required the assistance of the other superpower, the Soviet Union. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had already threatened to retaliate against the United States if it ever intervened in Cuba. After the Bay of Pigs, he backed up his commitment to Cuba by supplying the Cuban army and militia with sophisticated weapons. Soviet officers and technicians also arrived to teach Cuban soldiers the tactics of modern warfare.

The United States denounced Cuba's alliance with the Soviet Union as an affront to the principles of both the Rio Pact and the Monroe Doctrine. President John F. Kennedy developed a two-pronged approach to pressure the Castro regime. On the one hand, he sought to promote economic growth and democratic reform in Latin America to provide an attractive alternative to Castro's revolution. On the other hand, the United States led the campaign to expel Cuba from the Organization of American States and organized a corps of counter-insurgency specialists to help Latin American leaders fight communist guerrilla movements.

By early 1962, the tangled triangle of U.S.-Soviet-Cuban relations seemed to be pointing toward confrontation. Castro announced that he was a Marxist-Leninist and that Cuba was a communist state. To defend his revolutionary government against the United States, he relied on his Soviet allies to supply Cuba with their most powerful weapons. For their part, the Soviets readily built up Castro's arsenal. They hoped to use Cuba as a base for extending their influence in the Western Hemisphere. Securing a strong communist Cuba located only ninety miles off the coast of Florida represented an important move for Moscow on the global chessboard. The United States saw the Soviet presence in Cuba as a threat to U.S. national security. Political pressure at home was mounting in 1962 for Kennedy to take action against Castro's revolution.

Behind the Soviet Gamble

When U.S. leaders discovered that the Soviets were installing nuclear missiles in Cuba, they were shocked and outraged. Why were Khrushchev and Castro carrying out this plan? What could they hope to gain? Could they believe that the United States would accept this action? In October 1962, Americans did not know the answers to these questions.

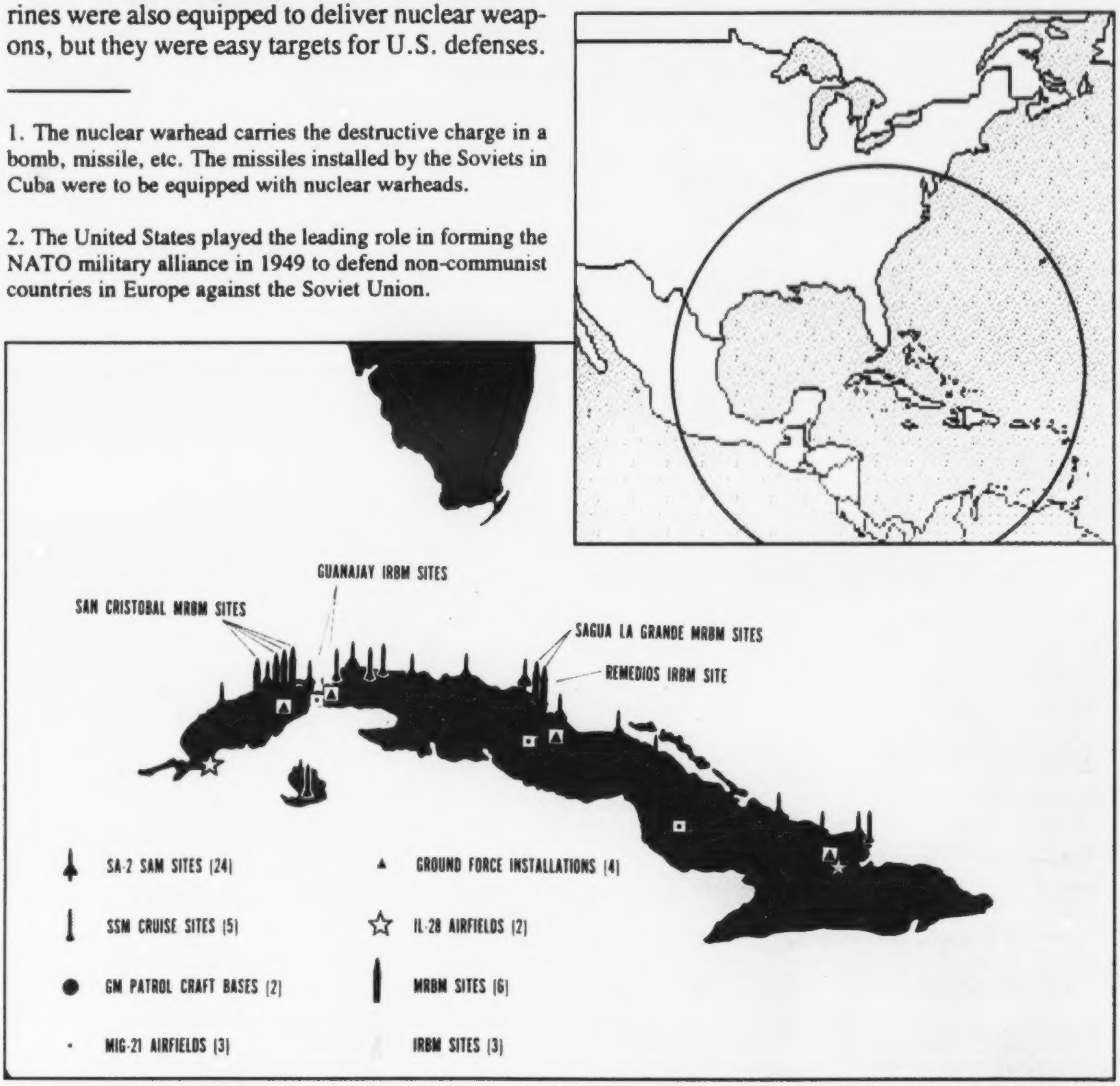
Since 1987, however, U.S., Soviet and Cuban participants in the crisis have talked with each other on several occasions about the events of 1962. Thanks to these discussions, we now know much more about the details of the Cuban missile crisis, including the motives of Khrushchev and Castro for installing nuclear missiles in Cuba.

A number of explanations have been offered for Khrushchev's decision to place the missiles in Cuba. In general, there is agreement that protecting Cuba and cutting into the U.S. advantage in nuclear weapons were the foremost concerns of the Soviets.

Following the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cubans and the Soviets were convinced that the United States would use direct force to remove Castro. In fact, the United States was continuing its efforts to isolate and destabilize Castro's government. Aware of U.S. objectives, Castro and Khrushchev believed that nuclear weapons would be a powerful deterrent to a U.S. invasion of Cuba. Decades later, Khrushchev's son, Sergei, who was an assistant to his father in 1962, stressed that the main reason for installing the missiles was to defend Cuba from a possible U.S. attack.

At the same time, however, other Soviet insiders contend that Khrushchev also hoped to address the imbalance of nuclear forces between the superpowers. In 1962, the United States could claim a decisive edge over the Soviet Union both in sheer numbers of nuclear warheads[1] and in the number of deliverable missiles.

The United States had more than one hundred nuclear missiles in Turkey capable of reaching the Soviet Union, as well as shorter-range missiles stationed in other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)[2] countries. Although the Soviets had a formidable nuclear arsenal in 1962, they did not have missiles stationed outside their own territory. At that time, the Soviets had only 20 land-based missiles capable of reaching the United States. Soviet long-range bombers and submarines were also equipped to deliver nuclear weapons, but they were easy targets for U.S. defenses. Soviet concerns about this nuclear imbalance also stemmed from Khrushchev's boasts in the late 1950s that Soviet nuclear capability was advancing rapidly. By 1961, though, it became obvious that the Soviet missile program was plagued by problems. The United States enjoyed vast superiority in every respect. In warheads, the United States had a seventeen to one numerical advantage--more than 5,000 warheads to the Soviets' 300. Nuclear weapons carried on U.S. bombers, submarines, and long-range missiles could reach the Soviet Union in minutes, but the Soviets' ability to strike at U.S. territory was limited.


GUANAJAY IRBM SITES
SAN CRISTOBAL MRBM SITES
SAGUA LA GRANDE MRBM SITES
REMEDIOS IRBM SITE
SA-2 SAM SITES (24)
GROUND FORCE INSTALLATIONS (4)
SSM CRUISE SITES (5)
IL-28 AIRFIELDS (2)
GM PATROL CRAFT BASES (2)
MRBM SITES (6)
MIG-21 AIRFIELDS (3)
IRBM SITES (3)

***Above:** The Soviet military build-up in Cuba was concentrated on the northwestern shore of the island, ninety miles from the United States. **Above right:** The Soviet SS-4 missiles in Cuba had a range of over 1,000 miles, putting much of the southeastern United States within striking distance.* (John F. Kennedy Library)

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[1] The nuclear warhead carries the destructive charge in a bomb, missile, etc. The missiles installed by the Soviets in Cuba were to be equipped with nuclear warheads.

[2] The United States played the leading role in forming the NATO military alliance in 1949 to defend non-communist countries in Europe against the Soviet Union.

Missiles in Cuba would significantly alter this military imbalance, allowing the Soviets to strike many major American cities, including the capital. In addition, the missiles could reach key military bases in much of the Southeast. The missiles could also be used as a bargaining chip to negotiate a withdrawal of U.S. nuclear forces from the periphery of the Soviet Union, especially from Turkey. Finally, the missiles could be used as leverage to pressure the United States and its allies to abandon West Berlin.

Soviet experts on the crisis stress dual motives for the placement of missiles in Cuba. According to Feodor Burlatsky, a Khrushchev speech writer, ''Khrushchev and the other Soviet leaders pursued two objectives--both the prevention of an invasion of Cuba and a change in the strategic balance of forces.''

Following the crisis, President Kennedy and his closest advisers came to believe that correcting this imbalance was Khrushchev's leading motive for placing missiles in Cuba. According to Secretary of the Treasury, Douglas Dillon, a mere forty missiles in Cuba ''radically altered the numbers of deliverable warheads, and in that sense radically increased Soviet capability.'' The Cuban missiles would have given the Soviets the ability to destroy approximately forty percent of Strategic Air Command bases, thereby knocking out a key element of U.S. defenses. Without those missiles, American base commanders had little to fear from Soviet attack.

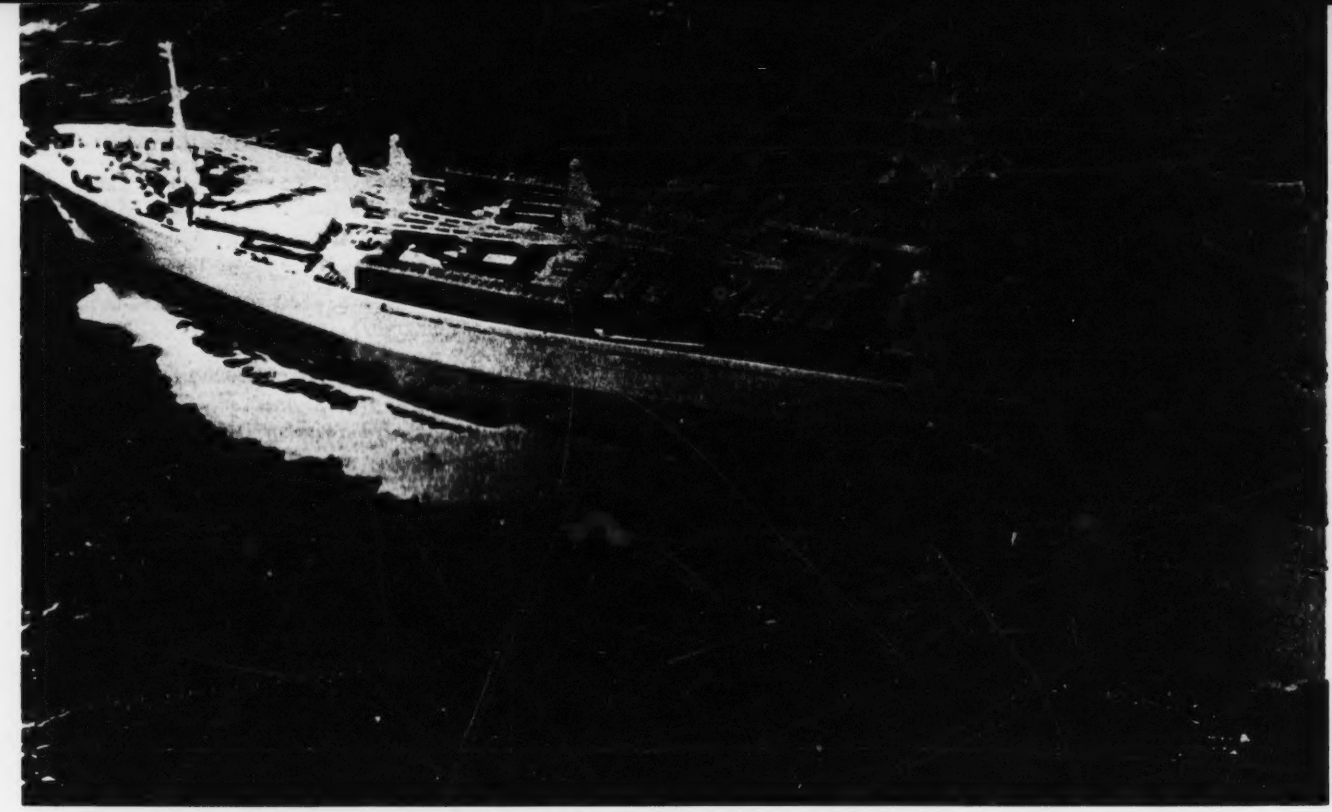
Some Soviets have confirmed this as an important concern, explaining that Khrushchev felt Soviet missiles in Cuba would serve as an answer to the deployment of U.S. missiles near Soviet borders in Turkey. According to Aleksandr Alekseyev, Soviet ambassador to Cuba during the crisis, ''Khrushchev wanted very much to make them [Americans] feel the same, to give them the same medicine which we were swallowing, having foreign missiles at our doorstep.''

Khrushchev's son Sergei explains, ''It naturally tormented our leadership a great deal. Because we were actually subject to a possible attack of American missile forces, and aviation forces, and we had nothing with which to respond.'' The missiles in Cuba would have given Khrushchev the response he was seeking. Alekseyev suggested in 1989 that Khrushchev simply did not consider the possibility that the Americans would react as strongly as they did.

West Berlin and the Crisis

After the Allies defeated Nazi Germany in World War II, their armies remained in the country. The United States, Great Britain and France occupied the western half of Germany and the Soviet Union remained in the eastern section. Berlin, the German capital, was divided between all four powers. With the onset of the Cold War, the Federal Republic of Germany (also known as the FRG or West Germany) was formed out of western Germany, and the Soviet part became the German Democratic Republic (also called the GDR or East Germany). Berlin, which lay in the heart of East Germany, was also divided into two parts. The Soviets felt that the Western presence in the middle of the GDR was a security threat. In 1948, the Soviets tried to drive the United States and its allies out of West Berlin by blockading the city and cutting off all supplies coming from the West. In response, U.S. planes flew food, fuel and medicine to the people of West Berlin, thwarting the Soviet efforts. The blockade was ended a year after it was begun. Another crisis occurred in Berlin during August 1961, when the Soviets put up a wall between the two halves of the city to keep East Germans from fleeing to the democratic west, where living standards were higher.

During the missile crisis, many U.S. policymakers feared that Berlin would again become a point of U.S.-Soviet conflict. They thought that the Soviets might try to force the United States to leave Berlin in exchange for removing the missiles from Cuba. Another possibility was that a U.S. attack on Cuba would be countered by a Soviet attack on West Berlin, all the more likely considering that Soviet forces already surrounded the city. Such a move could result in nuclear conflict, since the United States had pledged to use nuclear weapons if necessary to defend West Germany and other NATO countries.



The Soviets were found shipping bombers to Cuba three weeks before the missile crisis. (John F. Kennedy Library)

Castro's Motives

While it is crucial to consider Soviet motives in the crisis, the Cuban viewpoint is equally important. Castro knew that accepting Soviet missiles risked a potentially catastrophic reaction from the United States. An invasion or an air strike could have resulted. Such an event would have shaken Castro's government and cost many Cuban lives. Yet it appears that Castro welcomed the missiles, not only because he thought they would deter U.S. aggression toward Cuba, but also because he believed that they would strengthen the Soviet Union and other communist countries.

Jorge Risquet, a top Cuban official, explains, "We agreed on the installation of the missiles, noting, first of all, that this assured an improvement in the socialist camp's defense capabilities, and that if the socialist camp was prepared to run a risk on Cuba's behalf, then Cuba should also assume its share of the risks."

Ambassador Alekseyev recalls, "Fidel fell to thinking, and then said, 'If this will serve the socialist camp, and if it will hinder the actions of American imperialism on the continent, I believe that we will agree.'"

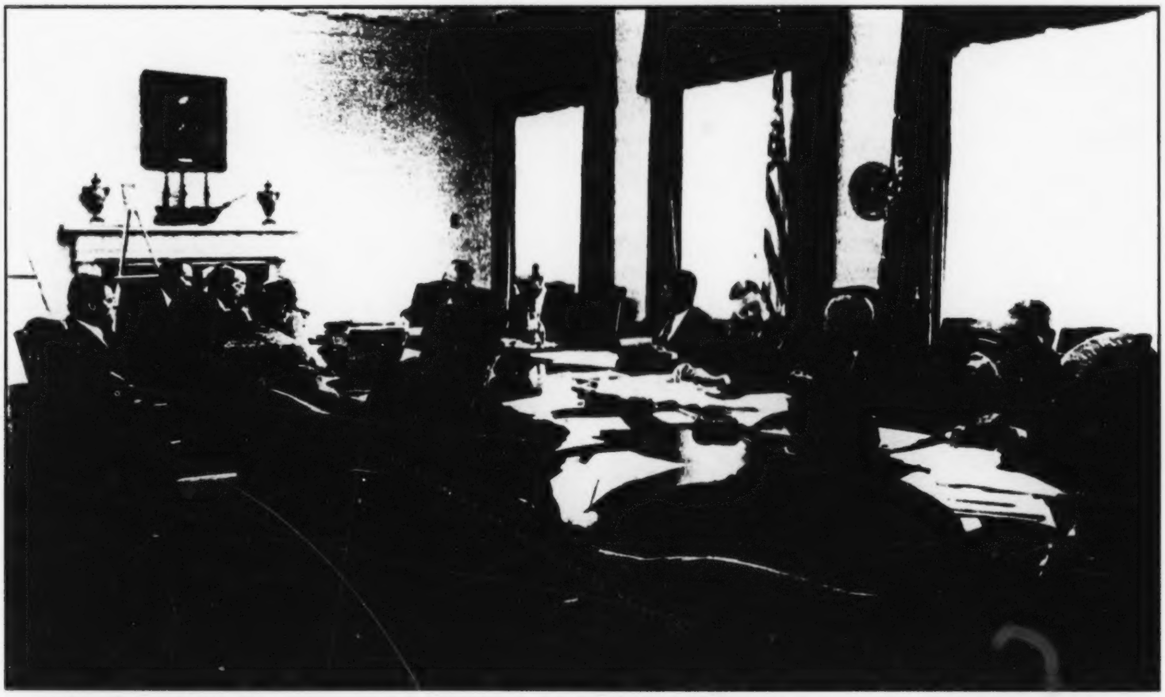
Thus, Castro accepted the missiles for three main reasons. First, he wanted to defend his own socialist government in Cuba. Second, he hoped to alter the nuclear and political balance of the Cold War in favor of the Soviet Union. And third, accepting the missiles was proof that Cuba was willing to take risks on behalf of socialism. Castro may have even been flattered by Khrushchev's offer: Cuba was to be the first communist country, other than the Soviet Union, in which Soviet nuclear missiles would be deployed.

U.S. Debates Response to Missiles

Theodore Sorensen, an adviser to the President, remembers that the President and his inner circle simply did not know what Khrushchev's motives were: "The only honest answer I have is, 'I don't know now, and I didn't know then.' None of us knew. We could only speculate about what Khrushchev was up to."

Khrushchev's motives aside, the White House was shocked that the Soviets had ignored U.S.

warnings against putting missiles in Cuba. President Kennedy was especially indignant at the secrecy surrounding the Soviet operation. Nuclear missiles so close to the U.S. border were considered plainly unacceptable. Since the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States had staunchly guarded the Western Hemisphere from foreign intervention. The Kennedy Administration recognized that members of Congress and the media would press for a strong U.S. response.



President Kennedy leads a session of the ExComm during the missile crisis. **(John F. Kennedy Library)**

In the White House, there was little disagreement that nuclear missiles in Cuba would pose a great threat to U.S. security. For the first time, American territory would be highly vulnerable to Soviet nuclear attack. From the U.S. perspective, the question was not whether the missiles should be removed, but how.

Initially, President Kennedy and his advisers decided to keep their knowledge of the missiles secret from the Soviets and the American public. On October 16, the President called together his closest and most trusted advisers to help him manage the crisis. This sixteen-member group was the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, or the "ExComm." President Kennedy and the ExComm met to consider different ways to remove the Soviet missiles from Cuba, ranging from the purely diplomatic to full-scale military assault. Over the next four days, the discussion produced three main choices for U.S. action:

1. Dovish: The United States could pursue purely diplomatic actions through the United Nations in order to pressure the Soviets to remove the missiles from Cuba. This would reduce the likelihood of military conflict. As a means of resolving the crisis, doves were willing to eliminate U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey in exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. This process could take a long time and might be viewed internationally as a sign of U.S. weakness.

2. Owlish: The U.S. Navy could blockade Cuba. This action would prevent the arrival of Soviet ships carrying materials necessary to make the missiles operational. A naval blockade represents a combination of diplomacy and a military response. This action would demonstrate U.S. willingness to fight if necessary, but would still allow a peaceful solution if the

Soviets and Cubans were cooperative. Because a blockade is considered an act of war, however, there was some concern that this approach might prompt the Cubans and Soviets to declare war on the United States.

3. Hawkish: U.S. Air Force bombers could launch an air strike to destroy the missile sites immediately, preventing them from becoming operational. Such an action would risk a minimal number of American lives, but would be likely to kill Soviet and Cuban military personnel and Cuban civilians. Though the U.S. Air Force was highly skilled, there was no guarantee that all of the missile sites would be destroyed in such a strike. Other hawks advocated an all-out invasion of Cuba, making full use of U.S. military superiority. Such an invasion could accomplish the removal of both the missiles and Castro. However, this option would risk American lives and could easily escalate into a dangerous conflict with the Soviet Union.

Each of the three strategies had supporters within the ExComm, and each was carefully weighed by President Kennedy. Among the prominent hawks were Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maxwell Taylor. These men felt that U.S. military superiority, even with missiles in Cuba, would see the United States through the crisis. An air strike or an invasion would scare the Soviets into backing down and, even if they fought back, the hawks expected the United States to prevail. Either way, according to Taylor, "We had 'em over a barrel."

Doves and owls, including Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Under Secretary of State George Ball, disagreed. They feared that direct military confrontation with the Soviets would escalate, possibly accidentally, into nuclear war. Even if the Soviets had fewer missiles, they could still do great damage to the United States.

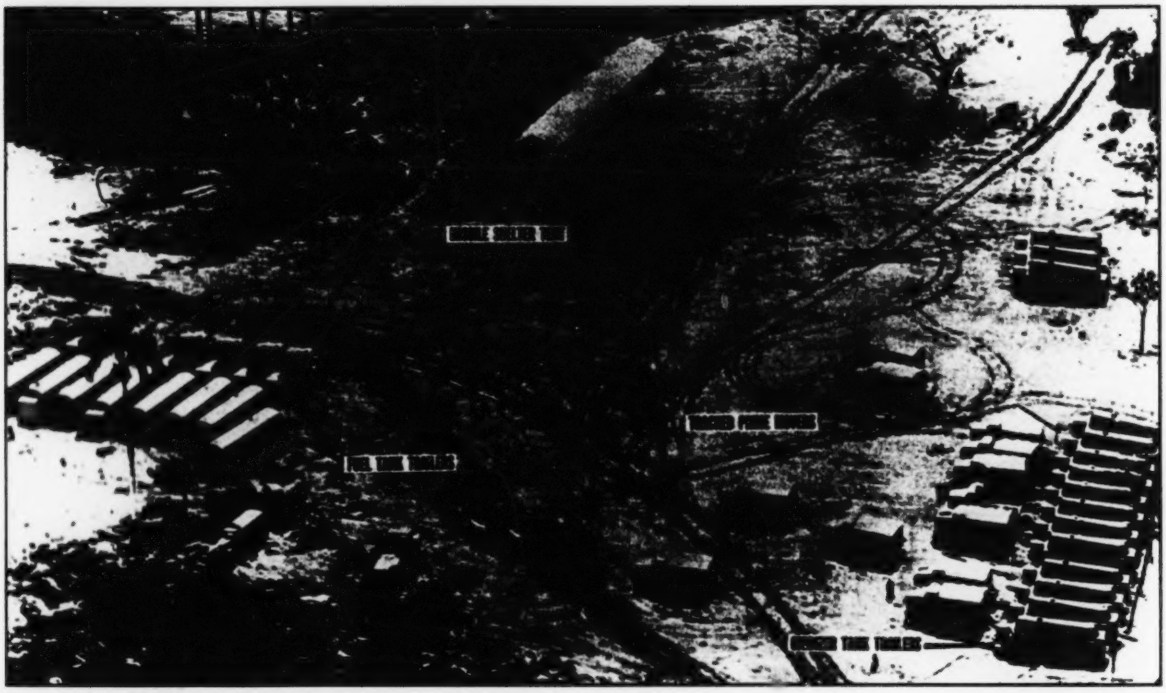
McNamara expressed concern: "If you go to nuclear war, and the other side retaliates, and only a few--maybe only one--bomb gets through to destroy an American city, you--the one who just initiated the nuclear war--will have to shoulder the responsibility for the worst catastrophe in the history of this country."

Ultimately, on October 20 President Kennedy decided upon a blockade--or quarantine--of Cuba by the U.S. Navy to prevent any further shipments of military supplies to the Cuban regime. This option allowed President Kennedy to steer a middle course between the ExComm's varied options. The quarantine did not commit the United States to a full-scale war, and it avoided the international embarrassment of giving up the Jupiter missiles.

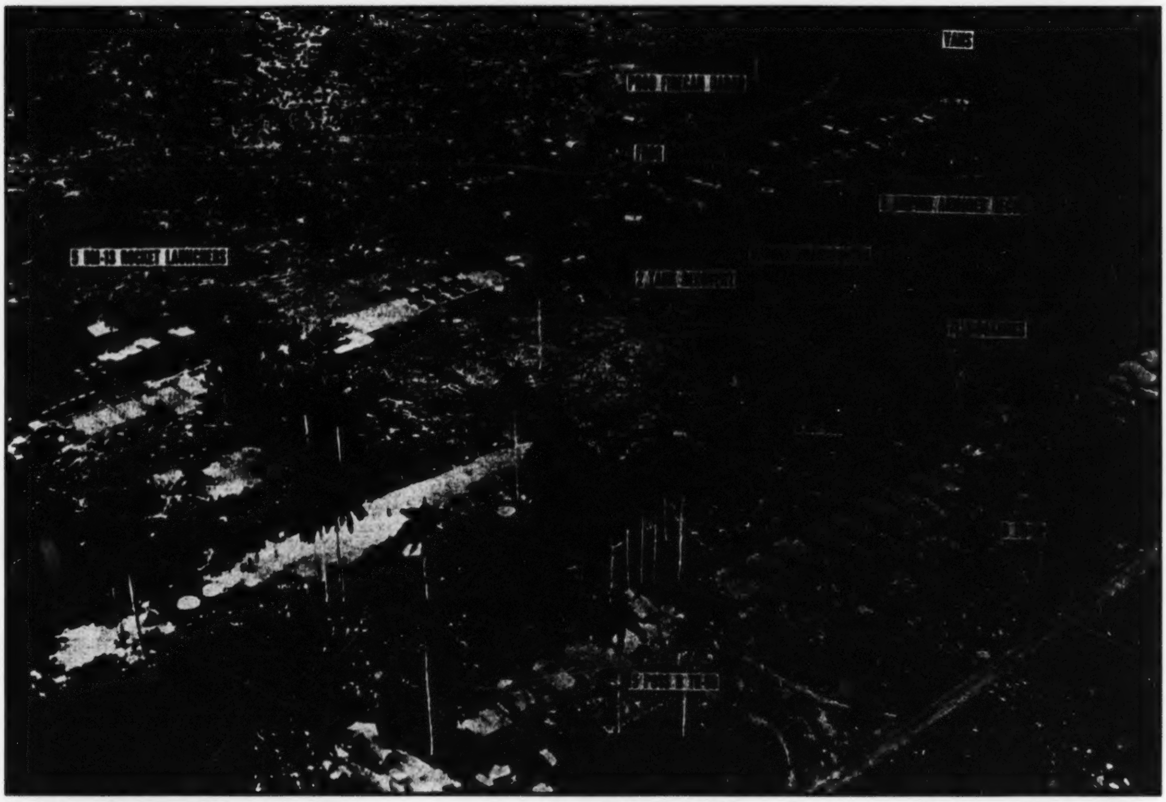
On the evening of October 22, Kennedy announced in a televised speech to the American public that the Soviets were installing nuclear missiles in Cuba. He then informed the nation of his decision to enforce a quarantine of Cuba until the missiles were removed. At the time, the President expected that the quarantine would be only the first step in a long war of nerves with the Soviets. In his speech, Kennedy warned that, "Many months of sacrifice and self-discipline lie ahead, months in which both our patience and our will will be tested."

President Kennedy and his advisers were particularly concerned about the operational status of the missiles in Cuba. The original U-2 reconnaissance photos had shown that the missiles and their silos were not yet ready for use. Kennedy, however, was uncertain of the progress being made on the missile bases. As far as the President and his advisers were concerned, these missiles had to be removed from Cuba before they could be launched at the United States.

Kennedy's October 22 address caught the Soviet government off guard. For several hours, there was no response. Soviet diplomats in the United States were especially baffled. Like most Americans, they first learned of the Soviet missile build-up in Cuba through Kennedy's speech. Meanwhile, Khrushchev's first reaction was anger. On October 23, Moscow contended that the quarantine of Cuba by the United States was a violation of international law. Khrushchev maintained that the missiles in Cuba, regardless of their type, were meant "exclusively for defensive purposes, in order to secure the Cuban republic from an aggressor's attack." He also



A U.S. reconnaissance pilot flew below 1,000 feet on October 23 to capture this view of a tent covering a Soviet missile. (John F. Kennedy Library)



Soviet rocket launchers, missile transporters, short-range Frog *missiles, and tanks were discovered at a military camp near Remedios, Cuba, on October 25.* (John F. Kennedy Library) warned the United States that military aggression towards Cuba might lead to nuclear war.

The U.S. government moved quickly to gain international backing for the quarantine. At the United Nations, U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Adlai Stevenson denounced the introduction of missiles in Cuba. He charged that Castro "aided and abetted an invasion of the hemisphere," making himself "an accomplice in the communist enterprise of world domination." Stevenson called for a United Nations vote to condemn the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba, but the Soviet ambassador to the U.N. vetoed Stevenson's proposal.

The Organization of American States (OAS), on the other hand, did vote twenty to zero in support of the U.S. quarantine, condemned the Soviet Union as an aggressor, and branded Cuba as a threat to security in the hemisphere. The secret manner in which the missiles were placed in Cuba infuriated Latin American governments. Many Latin American leaders also feared Cuban support of communist guerrilla movements in their own countries.

To Think About

1. Why did Cuba become a source of tense conflict between the superpowers?

2. Why did the Soviets want to station nuclear missiles in Cuba?

3. What were the options considered by President Kennedy in response to the missiles?

On the Brink

As tempers flared and the crisis intensified, it seemed to many that war, possibly nuclear war, was probable. The U.S. naval quarantine went into effect October 24. Initially, Khrushchev ordered Soviet ships to race towards the quarantine line, inviting confrontation. The Soviets threatened to sink any U.S. vessel that tried to prevent their passage to Cuba. That same day, U.S. nuclear forces were placed on DEFCON 2 alert for the first and only time in history: bombers remained airborne, and missile silo covers were opened in preparation for launching. On October 25, at least a dozen Soviet ships en route to Cuba turned back, but preparations at the missile sites on the island accelerated. Soviets and Cubans started working around the clock to make the missiles operational.

War seemed even more likely when Soviet forces shot down a U.S. reconnaissance flight over Cuba on October 27, killing the pilot, Major Rudolf Anderson. The day before, Castro had ordered Cuban air defense forces to fire on any U.S. aircraft that flew within range. Meanwhile, the ExComm received reports that the missiles in Cuba were about to become operational.

The tension was reaching a breaking point. Any Soviet attempt to break through the blockade could result in an armed conflict between the superpowers. Accidental nuclear war was even a possibility. If the Soviets refused to back down, the United States would be faced with the options of allowing the missiles to remain in Cuba, launching an air strike, or invading the island.

DEFCON

DEFCON, or Defense Condition, refers to the U.S. state of readiness for nuclear war. The DEFCON scale runs from five, for peace-time conditions, to zero, for a nuclear attack. On October 24, 1962, the Strategic Air Command was placed on DEFCON 2 for the first and only time in history. This meant that:

1. Battle staffs were placed on twenty-four hour alert
2. All military personnel were forbidden to go on leave
3. 183 bombers were dispatched to thirty-three airfields throughout the country
4. One-eighth of all U.S. B-52 bombers were constantly airborne
5. Additional bombers were placed on alert on runways throughout the United States
6. Ninety U.S. nuclear missiles were placed at a heightened state of readiness

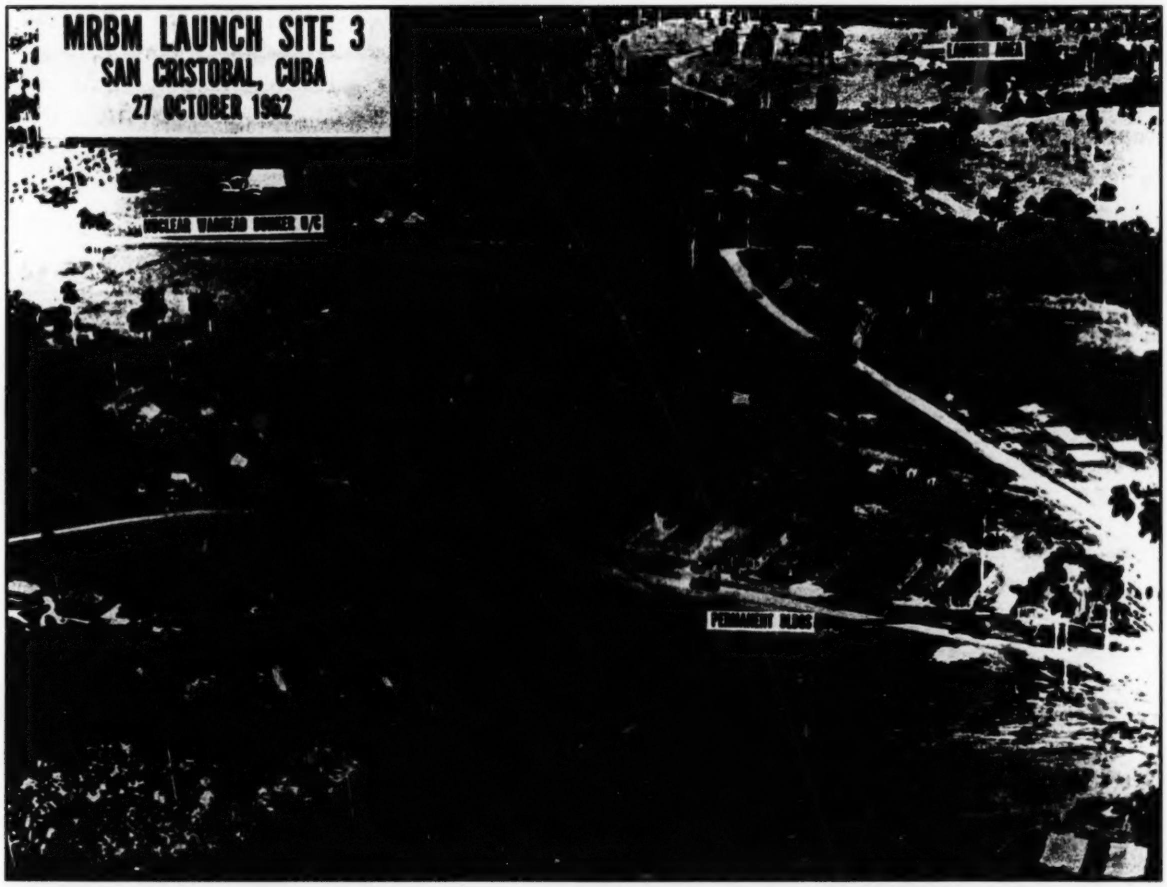
The last two options risked high casualties and direct confrontation with Soviet forces.

To make matters more difficult, there was no assurance that the Soviets' control over the missile sites was as secure as Khrushchev claimed. No one in Washington knew for sure if nuclear warheads had reached Cuba, but U.S. leaders feared the worst. ExComm members were especially worried that nuclear missiles might become operational in Cuba before the United States took action. The possibility of a junior officer ordering an attack tormented U.S. decision makers. Even a single nuclear missile striking the United States would have been catastrophic, potentially killing hundreds of thousands of people. With these pressures bearing down on the ExComm, the option of removing U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey to gain the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba was considered with new urgency. But even supporters of an exchange recognized that any agreement should not be seen as a public trade.

Kennedy and Khrushchev Exchange Letters

During the final two days of the crisis, attempts to reach a settlement gathered momentum. President Kennedy received two letters from Premier Khrushchev. The first, received October 26, was an emotional appeal written by Khrushchev himself, calling on Kennedy to avoid the catastrophe of nuclear war. In this letter, Khrushchev indicated that the Soviet Union would take its missiles out of Cuba in return for a U.S. pledge not to invade the island.

On October 27, a second letter arrived signed by Khrushchev. This letter took a much more hardline position, insisting that the United States



The construction of permanent buildings to serve as troop barracks indicated Soviet plans to maintain a long-term presence at this missile site. (John F. Kennedy Library) remove its nuclear missiles from Turkey in return for a withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba. Kennedy found the demands contained in the second letter unacceptable for two reasons. First, the Turkish government was not willing to have the Jupiter missiles removed. Second, such an exchange would leave NATO's southern flank vulnerable. Turkey and other U.S. allies on the Mediterranean counted on U.S. medium-range nuclear missiles to deter an attack by the Soviet Union. With the world watching, Kennedy did not want to appear weak in the confrontation of superpowers.

After much analysis and debate of the two letters, Kennedy and his advisers decided to respond only to the first letter and to ignore the second one. On the evening of October 27, President Kennedy offered to "give assurances against the invasion of Cuba" and to "remove promptly" the quarantine measures that were in effect. In return, Kennedy expected the Soviet missiles to be removed from Cuba under international observation and supervision. Kennedy also demanded safeguards to ensure that such weapons did not enter Cuba again.

On that same evening, President Kennedy sent his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, to meet with Soviet Ambassador Anatoliy Dobrynin. In his memoirs, Robert Kennedy recalled what he told Dobrynin:

President Kennedy and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. (John F. Kennedy Library)

> We had to have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases would be removed. I was not giving them an ultimatum but a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases, we would remove them. President Kennedy had great respect for the Ambassador's country and the courage of its people. Perhaps his country might find it necessary to take

Jupiter Missiles

At the time of the missile crisis, the Soviet Union had many more troops and non-nuclear weapons in Europe than the United States and its NATO allies. The United States, however, had a greater nuclear capacity and depended on nuclear weapons to deter the Soviets from attacking U.S. allies. U.S. Jupiter missiles had been installed in Turkey to protect the southern European members of NATO. By 1962, these missiles were outmoded and easy for the Soviets to target. As a result, the United States had developed the Polaris submarine, which carried nuclear missiles on board. Travelling deep underwater, the submarine was very difficult to destroy. President Kennedy made plans in 1961 to add a Polaris submarine to the U.S. Mediterranean fleet, and had scheduled the removal of the old Jupiter missiles. In October 1962, however, the Polaris was not yet ready.

Had the President traded the Jupiters before the Polaris arrived, the U.S. nuclear deterrent would have been weakened and Turkey would have been vulnerable to Soviet attack. In addition, all the NATO allies, as well as the Soviets, might have doubted the sincerity of the U.S. pledge to use nuclear weapons to defend its allies. The NATO alliance would have been severely damaged if it were thought that the United States would sacrifice the security of its allies to protect itself in a regional crisis.

> retaliatory action; but before that was over, there would not only be dead Americans but dead Russians as well....Time was running out. We had only a few more hours--we needed an answer immediately from the Soviet Union. I said we must have it the next day.

During the course of this meeting, Robert Kennedy warned Ambassador Dobrynin that events were spiraling out of control. Unless the Soviets agreed to remove the missiles, Kennedy stated, the President would order U.S. armed forces to remove them. Robert Kennedy also revealed that the U.S. missiles in Turkey were outmoded and that the United States had already made plans before the crisis to remove them. However, he warned Ambassador Dobrynin that if the Soviets tried to present the deal as a missile trade, the United States would deny that any such agreement existed.

Waiting for an Answer

Neither the President nor his advisers were confident that Khrushchev would accept this final offer. U.S. preparations for an air strike against the missile sites and an invasion of Cuba intensified. Over 100,000 battle-ready troops had massed in Florida to await the President's orders.

During the missile crisis, President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev drew on the personal relationship they had developed while meeting in Vienna in June 1961. (John F. Kennedy Library)

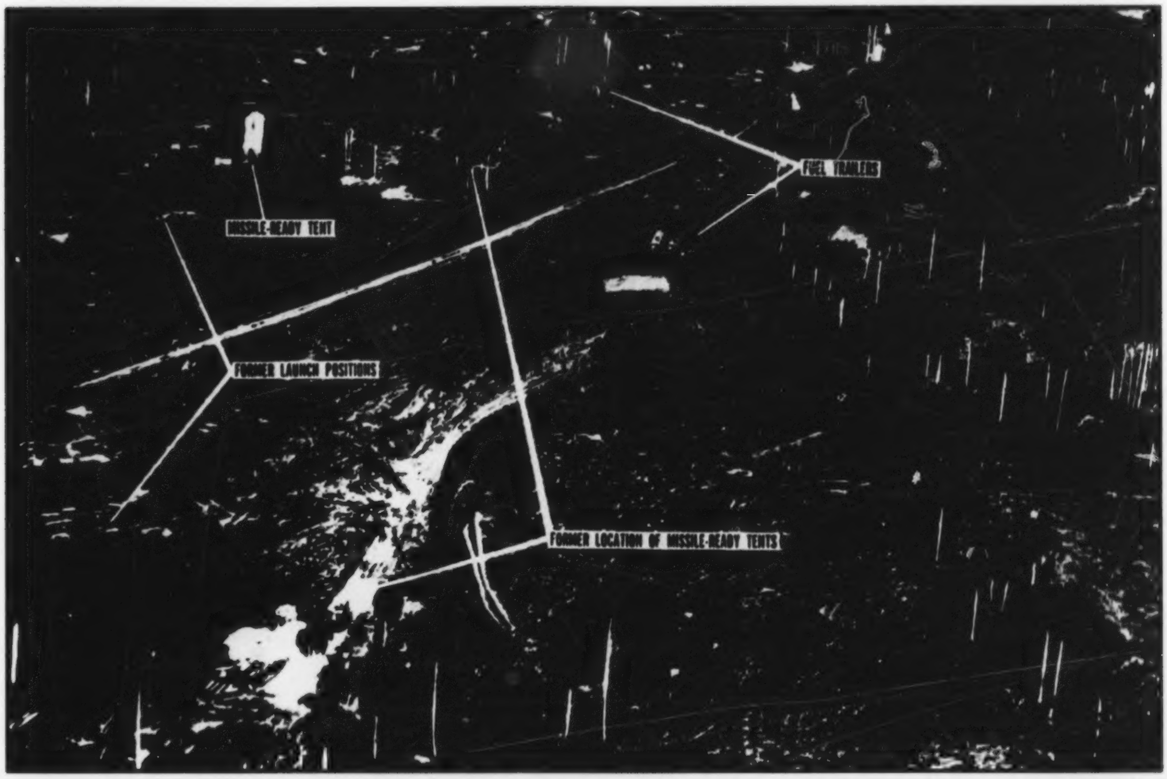
No one was sure what Khrushchev's reaction would be to a U.S. attack. If the United States invaded Cuba, would Khrushchev retaliate against U.S. forces in West Berlin, or Turkey? If Soviets were killed in Cuba, would the USSR strike at Americans in Europe? Worse yet, if some of the missiles in Cuba were ready for launch, would they be fired toward targets in the United States? These were some of the questions that haunted members of the ExComm after their meeting at 9 P.M. on the night of Saturday, October 27, later called by adviser Theodore Sorensen, "Black Saturday."

President Kennedy had just read Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August*, which described how the leaders of Europe miscalculated their way into war in 1914. The President did not want this crisis to become the subject of a future book about how superpower miscalculations led to World War III, a nuclear war. According to his brother Robert, President Kennedy wanted to be sure that, "If anybody is around to write after this, they are going to understand that we made every effort to find peace and every effort to give our adversary room to move. I am not going to push the Russians an inch beyond what is necessary."

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recalls similar concerns: "The possibility of blundering into disaster preoccupied me during the missile crisis....What the missile crisis impressed upon me was that, yes, we could stumble into a nuclear war; and that such an event, however 'limited,' was totally unacceptable, and thus that it must be avoided."

On the other hand, not all of Kennedy's advisers felt this way. Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon stated after the crisis, "I didn't understand then, and I don't understand now, why people worried so much about one limited, conventional action leading to nuclear war. The idea is preposterous!"

On October 27, Khrushchev received President Kennedy's letter and Ambassador Dobrynin's report of his meeting with Robert Kennedy. Also on that date, he received a cable from Castro. The Cuban leader expressed his belief that the



Reconnaissance photos confirmed that the Soviets moved quickly to dismantle their missile bases in Cuba after October 28. (John F. Kennedy Library)

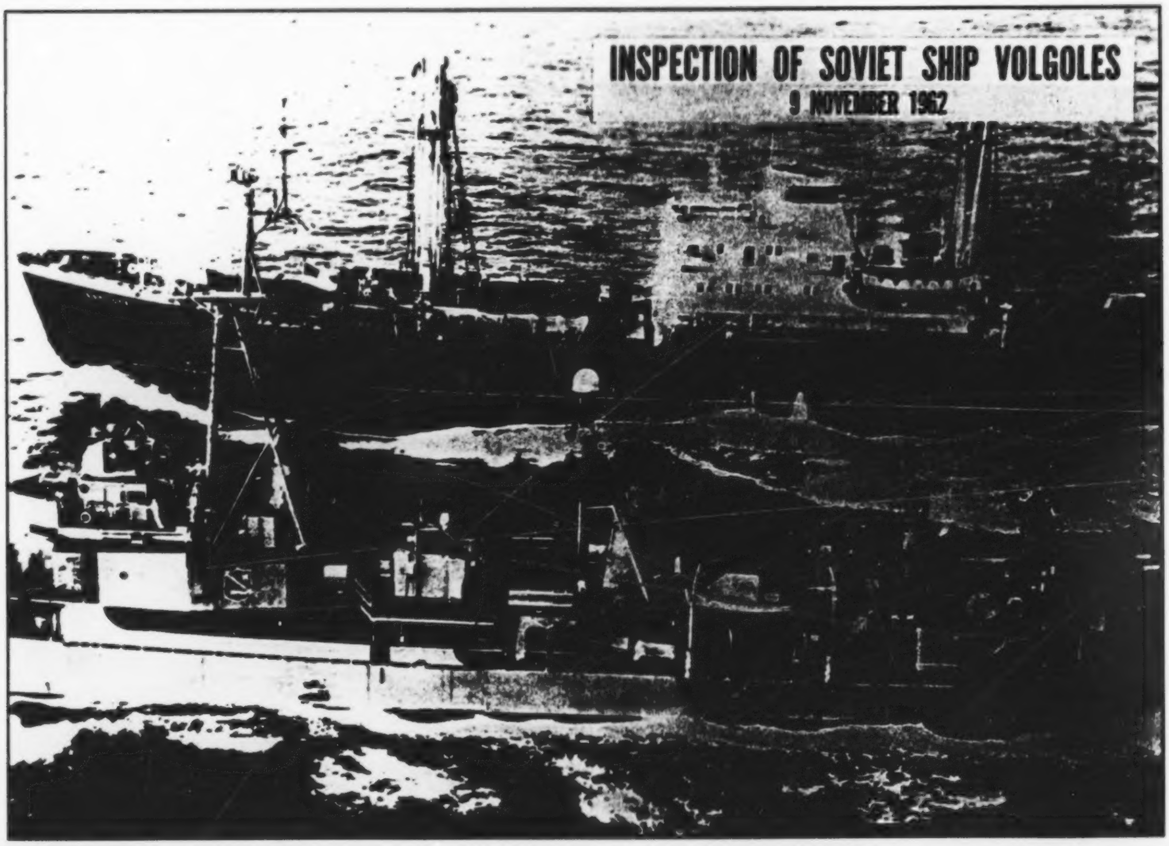
United States would invade his island in the coming days and called on Khrushchev to launch nuclear missiles at the United States in response to the expected attack. Khrushchev was faced with a difficult decision. Should he refuse the U.S. offer, risk military confrontation, and a possible invasion of Cuba? If he stuck to his proposed swap of Turkish missiles for Cuban missiles, would the United States give in? Or should he accept Kennedy's offer?

The next day, Premier Khrushchev backed down. Radio Moscow announced that the Soviet Union was ordering the dismantling and removal of the missiles in exchange for U.S. guarantees of Cuban sovereignty. Khrushchev's statement on Radio Moscow, directed to President Kennedy, said: "The Soviet government, in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuance of further work on construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the weapons, which you describe as offensive, and to crate them and return them to the Soviet Union." The Cuban missile crisis, which had brought the superpowers to the brink of war, possibly nuclear war, was over.

Cuba's Reaction

Castro was enraged by Khrushchev's decision. News of the deal between the Soviets and the Americans reached him by radio. He had not been consulted because Moscow believed that he would not endorse the U.S.-Soviet agreement. While Moscow, Washington, and the rest of the world breathed easier after October 28, Castro kept Cuba on a war footing. He had already ordered the mobilization of 270,000 Cuban soldiers on October 22 in anticipation of a U.S. invasion. Castro was convinced that the United States would not honor its pledge to live at peace with Cuba. He had believed all along that the Soviet missiles were needed to deter U.S. intervention and defend the Cuban revolution.

At the same time, Soviet diplomatic



A U.S. destroyer inspects a Soviet ship transporting a missile from Cuba to the USSR. (John F. Kennedy Library)

representatives were pressing Castro to accept the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement. Castro accused the Soviets of abandoning Cuba in the face of U.S. aggression. He would not permit U.S. specialists to come to Cuba for verification of the removal of the missiles. Verification had to take place in international waters. The Soviet-Cuban talks continued until November 19 before Castro reluctantly gave his assent to other aspects of the agreement. Adding to the pressure felt by the Cuban leader, the United States continued its naval blockade and daily reconnaissance flights during the negotiations.

In the end, Castro saw the resolution of the missile crisis as a threat to Cuba's security. Khrushchev had not only agreed to the withdrawal of the missiles, but also to the removal of a squadron of Soviet bombers in Cuba. Castro had pushed for a five-part agreement that would have not only ended the quarantine, but also would have guaranteed Cuba against U.S. attack, limited the activities of anti-Castro Cuban exiles living in Miami, returned the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo to Cuba, and ended an ongoing U.S. economic blockade of Cuba.

Top Cuban official Jorge Risquet explains: "We believe that besides having salvaged world peace and having prevented nuclear war, we should also have salvaged peace for Cuba, a peace that included a halt to the economic blockade, turning over the naval base at Guantanamo, and an end to all attacks on Cuba."

Thus, Khrushchev and Kennedy's plan ended the crisis and the immediate danger of war between the superpowers but left the Cubans feeling that their concerns had been ignored. As a result, U.S.-Cuban tensions persisted.

Changes in Superpower Relations

Throughout the Cuban missile crisis, the fear of nuclear war hung over the heads of both the U.S. and Soviet leaders. President Kennedy said

The resolution of the missile crisis strengthened ties established earlier between Kennedy and Khrushchev. (John F. Kennedy Library)

that he believed that there was a thirty to fifty percent chance of nuclear war during the missile crisis. Khrushchev was clearly just as concerned about the possibility of nuclear war. In order to avoid a confrontation, he turned his back on his Cuban ally and came to terms with his Cold War rival. By doing so, Khrushchev risked not only his ties with Cuba but also his country's reputation as a global superpower.

After the missile crisis, a hotline was established to ease communication between U.S. and Soviet leaders in times of crisis. The arrangement featured teletype machines installed in both the Kremlin and the White House. The hotline has reportedly been used dozens of times. The risk of a misunderstanding resulting in deadly conflict was reduced.

The missile crisis also impressed on the minds of both Kennedy and Khrushchev the dangers of making nuclear threats against each other. Having come so close to the unthinkable horror of a nuclear war, leaders on both sides recognized the need to embark on a new path to prevent nuclear confrontation in the future.

Georgiy Shakhnazarov, an aide to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, states: "I am convinced that if there had been no Caribbean crisis, the danger of nuclear war in the subsequent years would have been incomparably greater. Nuclear weapons might have been used in Vietnam and in other cases."

In a speech the year after the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy reflected similar concerns about avoiding nuclear confrontation:

> If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is the fact that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal....Confident and unafraid, we labor on--not toward a strategy of annihilation, but toward a strategy of peace.

To Think About

1. Why did President Kennedy respond only to Premier Khrushchev's first letter?

2. What did Kennedy mean by saying that the United States "made every effort...to give our adversary room to move"?

3. In what ways did Castro's view of the conclusion of the crisis differ from the views of Kennedy and Khrushchev?

Chapter 3

Three Decades of the Tangled Triangle

Introduction

Americans greeted the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis with a sigh of relief. The United States had stood up to communism, war had been avoided, and there was even the possibility of better relations with the Soviet Union. On a larger scale, Americans felt confident that their country remained unrivaled as the strongest nation in the world. There seemed to be few limits to American power in the early 1960s. U.S. forces waged the Cold War throughout the globe: delving deeper into Vietnam, staring down the Soviets in Europe, and maintaining vigilance in the Caribbean and Central America.

Exporting the Cuban Revolution

Throughout the world, the early 1960s brought great changes. Countries in Africa and Asia faced the challenges of independence as a result of decolonization.[1] New political movements sprang up in many areas to confront the established order. In many ways, Cuba was a symbol of this era. The country's economic and political experiments aimed to offer everyone a decent standard of living and equal opportunity. Cuba had also won admiration for defying the United States. Some people in the Third World[2] saw Cuba's communist system as a model for their own countries. Fidel Castro sought to take advantage of Cuba's growing stature by encouraging revolutions in other nations, especially in Latin America.

Castro's bold foreign policy, however, clashed with U.S. efforts to contain communism. The Cuban missile crisis, in fact, had done little to alter the hostility between the United States and Cuba. If anything, the episode had only hardened positions on both sides. The United States continued a strict economic embargo against Cuba and worked to isolate the Castro government in the international arena. For its part, Cuba quickened the pace of its own revolution and loudly condemned what Castro viewed as U.S. imperialism. For much of the 1960s, the struggle between the United States and Cuba captured world attention.

Castro's most famous ally in promoting the Cuban revolution was Ernesto Ché Guevara, a doctor from Argentina. Guevara had witnessed the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954, an event that convinced him that democratic reform in Latin America faced insurmountable obstacles. In 1956, Guevara joined forces with Castro. After the revolution, he was appointed as Cuba's minister of industry. Guevara organized a highly centralized economy that gave him enormous decision-making power. But Guevara was first and foremost an impatient revolutionary, not an economist. He believed that Cuba should strive to produce workers dedicated to the ideals of the revolution rather than emphasize economic efficiency. Despite Guevara's hopes, Cuba's economic performance sputtered during the 1960s as the country suffered from the mismanagement and incompetence of the central authorities.

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[1] After World War II, many countries in Africa and Asia gained independence from European colonial powers. Britain and France controlled the largest empires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[2] First popularized by French journalists in the 1950s, the term *Third World* was meant to contrast the less developed nations of Latin America, Africa, and Asia with the *First World* of industrialized Western democracies and the *Second World* of communist states led by the USSR.

In the spring of 1965, Ché mysteriously disappeared. Rumors placed him fighting with rebel troops in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Two years later, a letter from Guevara announced that he was in Bolivia trying to ignite a revolutionary struggle. Ché targeted the United States as his ultimate enemy and called on the peoples of Latin America to follow the example of North Vietnam in fighting against the United States. Guevara's call to arms, though, sparked little response among the poor peasants of Bolivia. In October 1967, Ché himself was tracked down and killed by Bolivian soldiers with the help of U.S. advisers.

Guevara's death marked an end to Cuba's most revolutionary phase. Cuba's aggressive foreign policy had strained its relationship with the Soviet Union. From the perspective of the Soviets, Castro was still an upstart. Moscow had been supporting communist parties for years in Latin America and favored a slower, more calculated approach to laying the groundwork for a communist revolution. The Soviets warned Castro to follow their lead, and cut back Cuba's oil shipments in 1967 to make their point.

The United States had its own reasons to be upset at Castro. Besides turning Guevara loose

Ernesto Ché Guevara **(Prensa Latina)**

Guevara's Bolivian Rebellion

Ernesto Ché Guevara began his revolutionary mission in Bolivia in November 1966 with less than fifty other rebels under his command. Ché's group camped in the jungle, emerging only to ambush Bolivian soldiers and steal their weapons. At first these surprise attacks were successful, and word of Guevara's rebellion spread. News of the communist rebels eventually reached Washington. Sensing a threat, the United States stepped in to train the Bolivian army to track the rebels down. Bolivia's neighbors also came to fear Ché's uprising and began to seal their borders. Despite his early successes, Ché received little support either from local peasants or the communist movement. The Soviet Union and the Bolivian Communist Party believed that South America was not ready for a communist revolution. Even Castro limited his contact with Guevara to avoid offending Moscow.

Without help from abroad, waging a guerrilla war in the jungles of Bolivia became very difficult. Ché's men spent most of their time fighting to survive. Medical supplies and food were scarce--Guevara's followers were sometimes forced to eat cats and anteaters. In August 1967, one-third of his group was killed in a surprise attack by the Bolivian army. Ché also lost followers to illness, desertion, drowning, and starvation. Others were killed in small skirmishes. With the help of local peasants, the U.S.-trained Bolivian army captured Ché on October 8, 1967. The next day the rebel leader was executed by government troops and his body put on display for journalists. Even in death, however, Guevara was not forgotten. Many Latin Americans were inspired by Ché's revolutionary ideals. In Cuba, his commitment to self-sacrifice and his struggles in the Bolivian jungle are often mentioned today as the country faces hard times.

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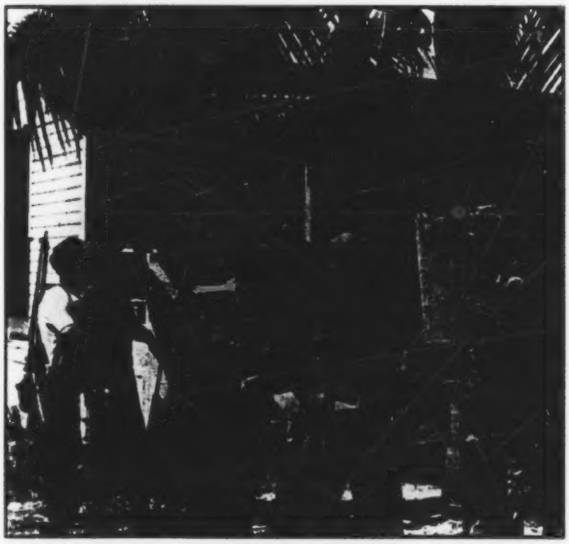
to instigate revolution in Bolivia, Castro had also shipped arms to guerrillas seeking to overthrow democratic governments in Venezuela and Costa Rica. As far as the United States was concerned, Castro's actions were aimed directly at undermining a new U.S. program to bolster democracy and social reform in Latin America. Under the Alliance for Progress initiated by President Kennedy in 1961, the United States had pledged $20 billion over ten years to fund plans for economic development. Likewise, the Peace Corps was created to allow thousands of young Americans to participate in projects designed to improve everyday life in Latin America and other less developed areas.

Kennedy believed that these programs offered the best hope for positive change in Latin America. "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable," he argued. At the same time, however, Kennedy beefed up the U.S. military response to the Cuban threat. An elite counter-insurgency corps, known as the Green Berets, was formed to help Latin American governments defeat communist rebels. Military units throughout the hemisphere were modernized to combat well-organized guerrilla movements while police forces were trained to control urban riots and sabotage.



Anti-communist Cuban exiles receive training in the early 1960s. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

A U.S. Peace Corps volunteer (sitting) in Latin America and local workers take a break from building a road in 1962. (Library of Congress)

Kennedy intended the counter-insurgency effort to further the cause of democracy and development. Instead, the ongoing conflict between the United States and the Soviet-Cuban alliance made security and stability the top U.S. priorities. This policy was demonstrated in 1965, when President Lyndon B. Johnson sent 23,000 U.S. troops to the Dominican Republic to make sure that supporters of Castro did not gain control of the government. In Central America, the United States often found itself on the side of leaders who violated democratic principles. For example, the United States supported the ruling Somoza family in Nicaragua, even though it held power by relying on election fraud and the Nicaraguan National Guard. In the aftermath of an earthquake that devastated Nicaragua in 1972, President Anastasio Somoza profited from the millions of dollars of relief aid that poured into the country. Troops from his National Guard resold relief supplies, and funds for reconstruction were paid to firms owned by the Somoza family. The corruption connected with the earthquake relief effort served to strengthen opposition to Somoza's rule in Nicaragua. Many threw their support to the Sandinistas, a guerrilla movement named after Augusto César Sandino. In 1979, the Sandinistas overthrew Somoza and soon allied their country with Cuba.

El Salvador, another long-time U.S. ally, also suffered from increasing violence in the 1970s. Election results in 1972 were overturned by the military-dominated government. The victorious candidate, José Napoleón Duarte, was arrested by police, jailed for a number of days, and then flown out of the country. Opposition parties refused to participate in elections later in the 1970s, and by 1977 a deadly civil war between the government and leftist guerrillas had begun. The United States aided the Salvadoran military, as Cuba and the Soviet Union supplied arms to the guerrillas. Even Duarte's election in 1984 did little to halt the violence that has claimed more than 60,000 lives.

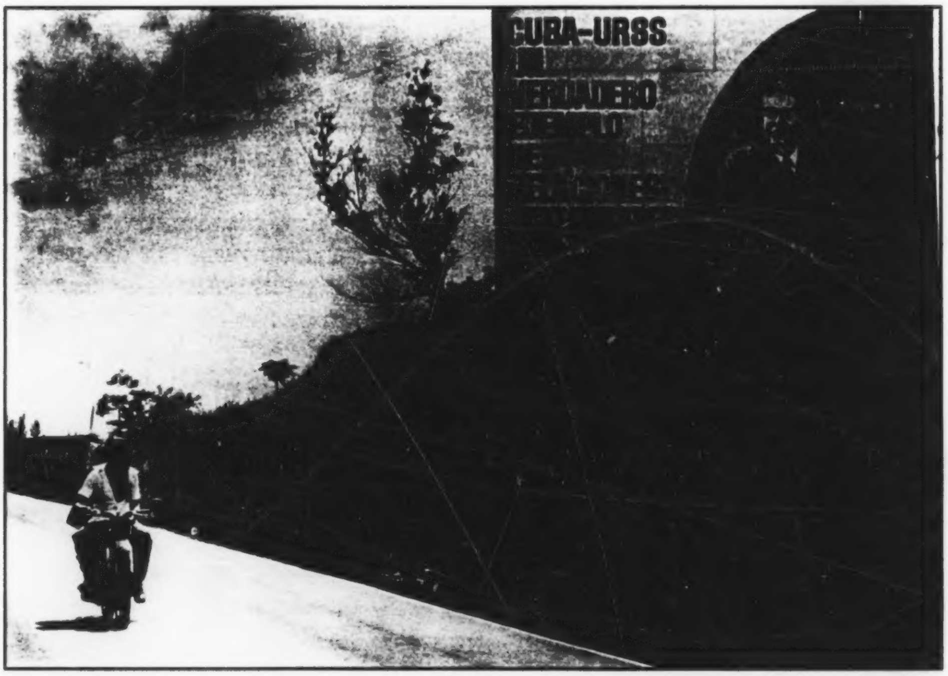
The Soviet-Cuban Alliance

By the end of the 1960s, many of the early hopes of the Cuban revolution had worn off. Other countries in Latin America did not follow Cuba's example. The United States maintained an economic embargo against Cuba, and the revolution's radical economic experiments produced confusion and shortages.

Moreover, the Soviets strongly pressured Cuba to give up efforts to export revolution. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 showed that Moscow was capable of punishing communist countries that did not closely follow the Soviet Union. Castro understood that Cuba could not afford to lose Soviet aid. His response was to strengthen Cuba's ties with the Soviet Union. He signed trade agreements in 1972 that firmly linked the two countries economically. Cuba also loyally supported the Soviet position in the United Nations and other international forums.

By the middle of the 1970s, Cuba had received billions of dollars in aid from Moscow. Soviet oil shipments shielded Cuba from the energy price hikes of the time. Castro's economy grew at an impressive pace. At the same time, Cuba and the Soviet Union worked together to promote communism in the Third World. In 1975, the Soviets airlifted Cuban troops to the African country of Angola to support a pro-Soviet political movement. At that time, Angola was emerging as an independent nation after defeating Portuguese colonial rulers. Three groups were fighting for power. Cuban forces helped the communist faction gain control of the capital and extend its authority over much of the country.

Cuba's involvement in Angola gave Castro a position of leadership in the Third World. In his view, the Cuban army was fighting on behalf of



A billboard in Cuba illustrates the warm relations during the 1970s between Fidel Castro (right) and former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The message hails the Cuban-Soviet alliance as "a true example of fraternal relations." (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

Castro and Human Rights

After coming to power, Fidel Castro imprisoned thousands of Cubans for political reasons. Like many of those imprisoned in the early 1960s, Jorge Valls went to jail before Castro's revolution for actively opposing the rule of Fulgencio Batista. Valls was imprisoned under Castro's regime in 1964 after continuing the struggle for democratic rights in his country. Below is an excerpt from Valls' account of the more than twenty years he spent in Castro's prisons:

We lined up again for water. This was always extremely scarce and was administered by the chief of the galley. It was generally four cups apiece, and that was what we had to drink, bathe, and perhaps wash some underwear. We tried hard to use as little clothing as we could, a pair of shorts or a pair of cut-off trousers...We tried not to get too near each other, but it was inevitable. We would go for lunch and dinner in the collective dining room, one galley at a time...It was better not to look at your plate because it might come with small grubs, worms or cockroaches. We were too hungry to be squeamish. If someone found a cockroach or other unusual object floating in his dinner, he would say, "This is protein," and either eat it or throw it away.

We, the prisoners, were not defeated in spirit, and in many ways we represented a threat to the regime. We were the most politically conscious sector of the population. There were so many of us that every family in Cuba had some kind of connection to someone in prison. We included dissident revolutionary leaders from every faction. Our numbers grew by the thousands, and soon the population of political prisoners, more than any battalion or political party, was the intellectual and political equivalent of the country's capital. That made us very dangerous.

peoples oppressed by colonialism, just as the Cubans had been oppressed by Spain. The communists in Angola, however, were unable to win a decisive military victory over their opponents. The civil war dragged on and Cuba's presence proved costly. More than 10,000 Cubans died in the fighting. Only in 1989 did Cuban troops begin to leave, after a negotiated settlement was reached involving the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and South Africa. The Soviets and Cubans have worked together elsewhere in Africa as well, particularly to bolster the former communist regime in Ethiopia during its 1978 war with neighboring Somalia.

While Cubans were fighting for communism in Africa in the late 1970s, President Jimmy Carter was reshaping U.S. foreign policy toward the Caribbean and Central America. The new President's emphasis on human rights concerned many leaders in the region. In 1977, for example, Guatemala rejected U.S. military aid when Carter demanded an end to the army's repression of political opponents. Somoza responded to similar charges against Nicaragua by hiring two American lawyers to justify his regime's human rights policies.

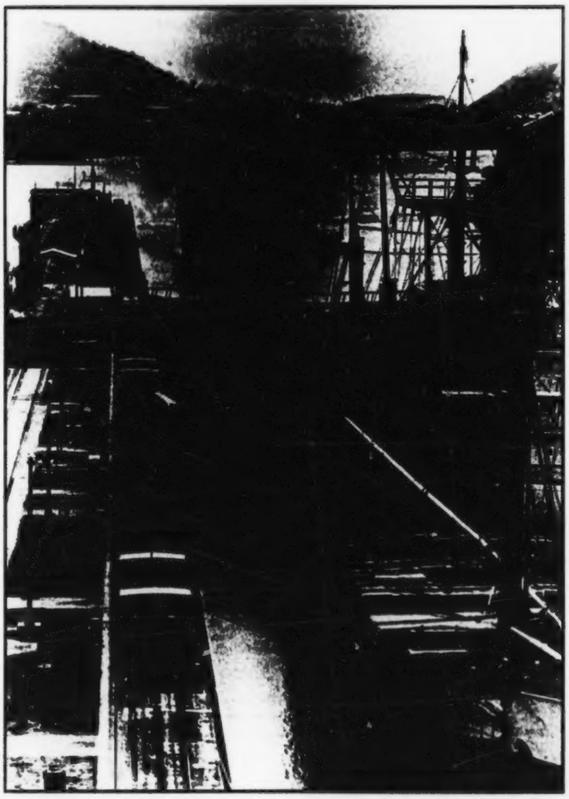
Carter also negotiated a treaty to turn the Panama Canal over to Panama by the year 2000. After weeks of fierce debate, the Senate eventually ratified the agreement. In the process, however, opponents of the treaty latched onto the issue as a symbol of everything that was wrong with U.S. foreign policy. For many of these Americans, the 1970s represented a period when the international strength and prestige of the Soviet Union rose at the expense of the United States.

To Think About

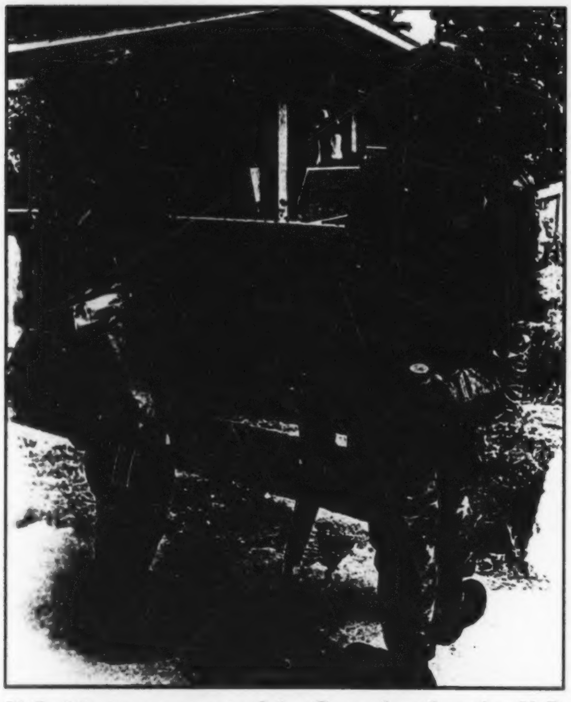
1. Why has Ché Guevara symbolized the most radical period of the Cuban revolution?

2. Why did Castro develop a closer relationship with the Soviet Union?

3. Why has Cuba been a valuable ally for the Soviet Union?



Merchant ships pass through the locks of the Panama Canal. (Library of Congress)

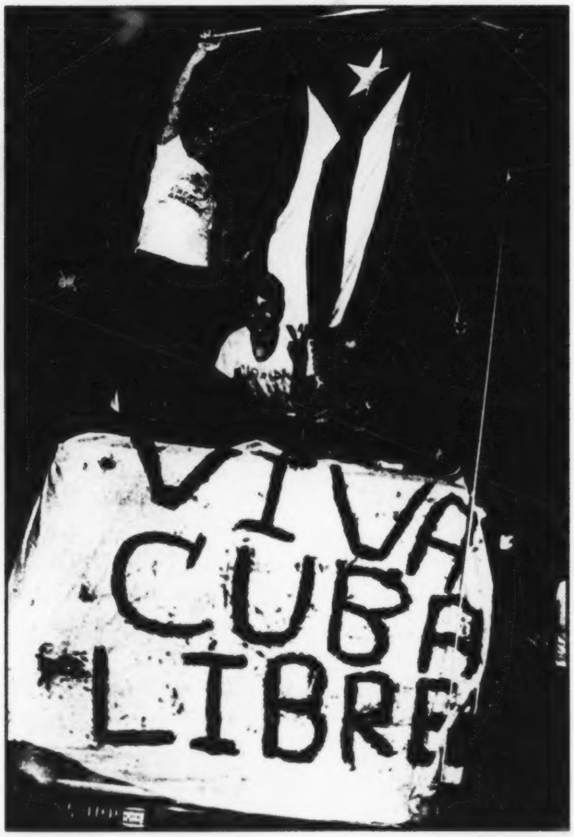


U.S. Marines on patrol in Grenada after the U.S. invasion of the island. (Department of Defense)

Reagan Battles Communism

Events during the course of the 1970s suggested, even to many Americans, that the United States was a declining power. U.S. policy in Vietnam had clearly failed by the middle of the decade, revolutions overthrew U.S. allies in Iran and Nicaragua in 1979, and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan that same year. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 marked a new direction for the United States in the world. President Reagan placed anti-communism at the heart of his foreign policy. He labeled the Soviet Union the "evil empire" and saw Cuba as the source of revolutionary aggression in Central America and the Caribbean. Reagan also pledged to put a stop to communist expansion in the region, thus setting the stage for a clash with Castro.

The first conflict came in Grenada, a small island nation in the Caribbean that had undergone



Cuban-American boys support Cubans seeking to emigrate to the United States in 1979. Their banner says, Long Live Free Cuba. (University of Miami Library) a revolution in 1979. Cuba provided substantial aid and technical support to the new regime. Cuban and Soviet involvement drew the attention of the United States, especially after construction began on an airplane runway that could potentially serve Soviet bombers. U.S. concern was raised further when a group of extremists murdered the prime minister and took control of the government. Reagan responded in October 1983 by sending an invasion force of two thousand soldiers. The troops easily overcame local resistance, but fought with Cuban construction workers in the process.

The Reagan Administration also struck at Cuban interests in Central America. Cuba's close ally, the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, became the target of a U.S. economic embargo in 1985. At the same time, the United States increased support for the contra[3] guerrilla forces fighting to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista regime. U.S.

U.S. paratroopers march near the Panama Canal.
(Department of Defense)

A U.S. Air Force sergeant gives Honduran troops a lesson in artillery. (Department of Defense) efforts were meant in part to counter Cuba's substantial investment in the Sandinistas. During the 1980s, Cuba not only provided $130 million in aid to Nicaragua but also sent thousands of non-military advisers. A similar situation existed in El Salvador. The United States supplied more than $1 billion in military aid during the 1980s to strengthen the government, while Cuba trained more than a thousand Salvadoran guerrillas to fight for revolution.

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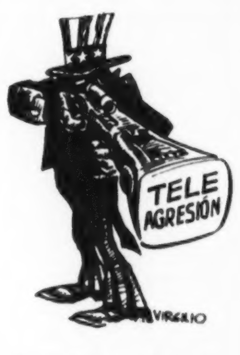
[3] The contras were a loose coalition of small, rebel armies opposed to the leftist government in Nicaragua. The contra revolt reached its peak of intensity in 1985-87.

At the close of the 1980s, the contest between the United States and Cuba clearly favored Washington. Cuban allies in Grenada had been swept away, and the guerrilla movement in El Salvador had failed to advance. The election of Violeta Chamorro to the presidency of Nicaragua in 1990 replaced the Sandinistas with a government friendly to the United States. The United States also showed its resolve to protect U.S. interests by invading Panama in 1989 to bring down the dictatorship of Manuel Noriega. Noriega had refused to recognize the results of democratic elections in his country, and had developed ties with Cuba. In the United States, the Cuban-American community of more than one million people was becoming more aggressive in its efforts to force Castro out of power. On balance, the Reagan Administration's anti-

A blimp beams TV Martí's signal. (Voice of America)

TV and Radio Martí

In 1985, the United States opened a radio station to broadcast news, music, and commentary to Cuba. The station was named Radio Martí in honor of José Martí, a Cuban patriot of the nineteenth century. President Reagan and Cuban exiles hoped that the radio station would educate Cubans about life in the United States and undermine support for Fidel Castro. Initially, Castro saw Radio Martí as a threat to his government, and tried unsuccessfully to jam its broadcasts. He also began sending Cuban radio signals over U.S. airwaves. In addition, Castro cancelled a new immigration agreement with the United States that would have allowed 20,000 Cubans to emigrate to the United States each year. After two years, however, Castro concluded that Radio Martí posed little threat to his regime. The Cuban leader renewed the agreement and stopped the radio broadcasts to the United States.

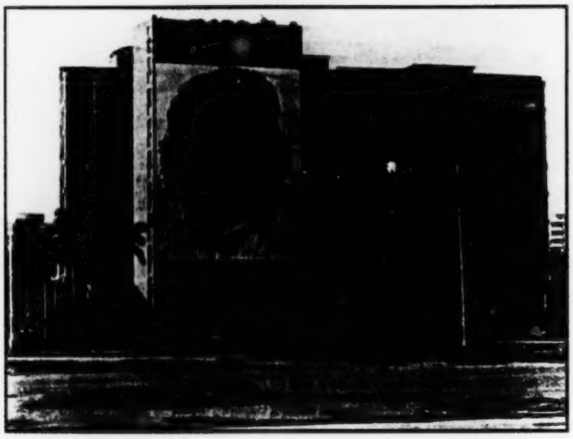


(From Cuba's *Granma*)

In 1990, the United States launched a more ambitious effort--TV Martí--in hopes of giving Cubans an attractive view of the American lifestyle. Spanish-language programming, including MTV videos, *Kate and Allie*, *ALF*, *The Cosby Show*, news and sports, was beamed toward Cuba. Castro responded by immediately jamming both the television and radio broadcasts coming from the United States. Among Americans, TV Martí remains a controversial subject. On the one hand, opponents argue that Castro spends only $1,000 to block every $1 million worth of U.S. transmissions. They also note that TV Martí airs only between 3 A.M.. and 6 A.M. Others, however, point out that the broadcasts are clearly seen by Castro as a danger to his government. And while TV Martí may not reach all Cubans, the programs are seen by more than 50,000 people. TV Martí's supporters have thus far prevailed. President George Bush approved an additional $16 million for TV Martí after its trial run ended in 1990.

communist offensive in the region had succeeded, leaving Castro in a lonely position.

For the people of the Caribbean and Central America, the 1980s were difficult times as well. The dramatic economic growth that took place in many countries from World War II through the 1970s came to a halt during the decade. The finances of the region had been first jolted by the rise in oil prices during the 1970s. Meanwhile, prices for local commodities, such as coffee, bananas, cotton and sugar, had lagged behind. By 1980, almost every country in the Caribbean and Central America found itself burdened by enormous debts to banks in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Adding to the strain has been the booming population in the region. From 1965 to 1985, the total number of people doubled and the average age fell below twenty years. Cities swelled with hundreds of thousands of new residents looking for work. As he battled communism, Reagan hoped that free trade would boost the economic fortunes of the Caribbean and Central America. In 1983, he announced the Caribbean Basin Initiative, a program that lowered tariffs on products from the countries of the region. Some American businesses, however, felt threatened by competition from the Caribbean and Central America, and worked to block an increase in U.S. imports.



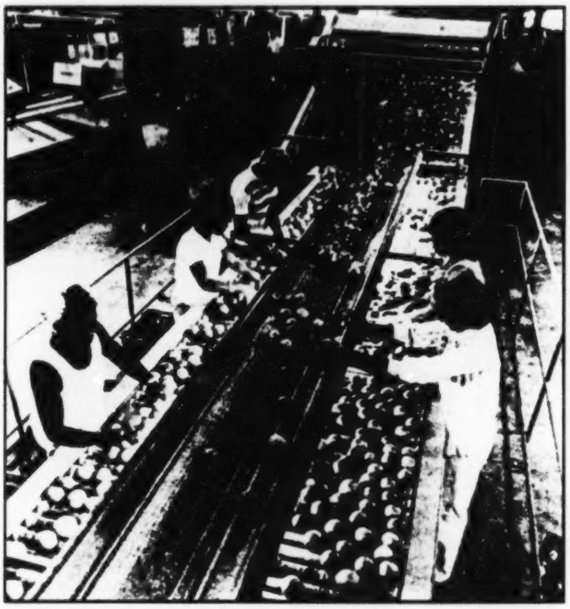
The image of Ché Guevara dominates apartments built under Castro. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

New Relations in the Gorbachev Era

The most important recent developments in U.S. foreign relations have been connected with the policies of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet

Cuba has placed a strong emphasis on education. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

Union. Gorbachev came to power in 1985, at a time when Soviet leaders recognized that their country's economy was rapidly deteriorating. Although he focused his energy on reform at home, Gorbachev also made major changes in Soviet foreign policy. Under his leadership, the Soviet Union largely gave up its Cold War competition against the United States, and allowed satellites in Eastern Europe to break away from Moscow's control.



Cuban workers process citrus fruits, one of Cuba's main exports. (Historical Association of Southern Florida)

Gorbachev's willingness to compromise prompted the United States to hope for a weakening of Soviet-Cuban ties as well. Gorbachev conceded that the Soviet economy was in shambles and appealed to his country's former enemies in the West for help. Decades of technological isolation had left Soviet industry backward and inefficient. President George Bush, however, called on the Soviets to first cut aid to the Castro regime before asking for U.S. assistance. Gorbachev refused to trade away the Soviet alliance with Cuba under U.S. pressure, but severe economic problems forced him to reduce Soviet support for Castro's government.

The failure of a coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 brought down many of the hard-line communists who had strongly supported Castro. During the 1980s, Cuba received approximately one-quarter of total Soviet aid. Soviet military

The Cuban Economy

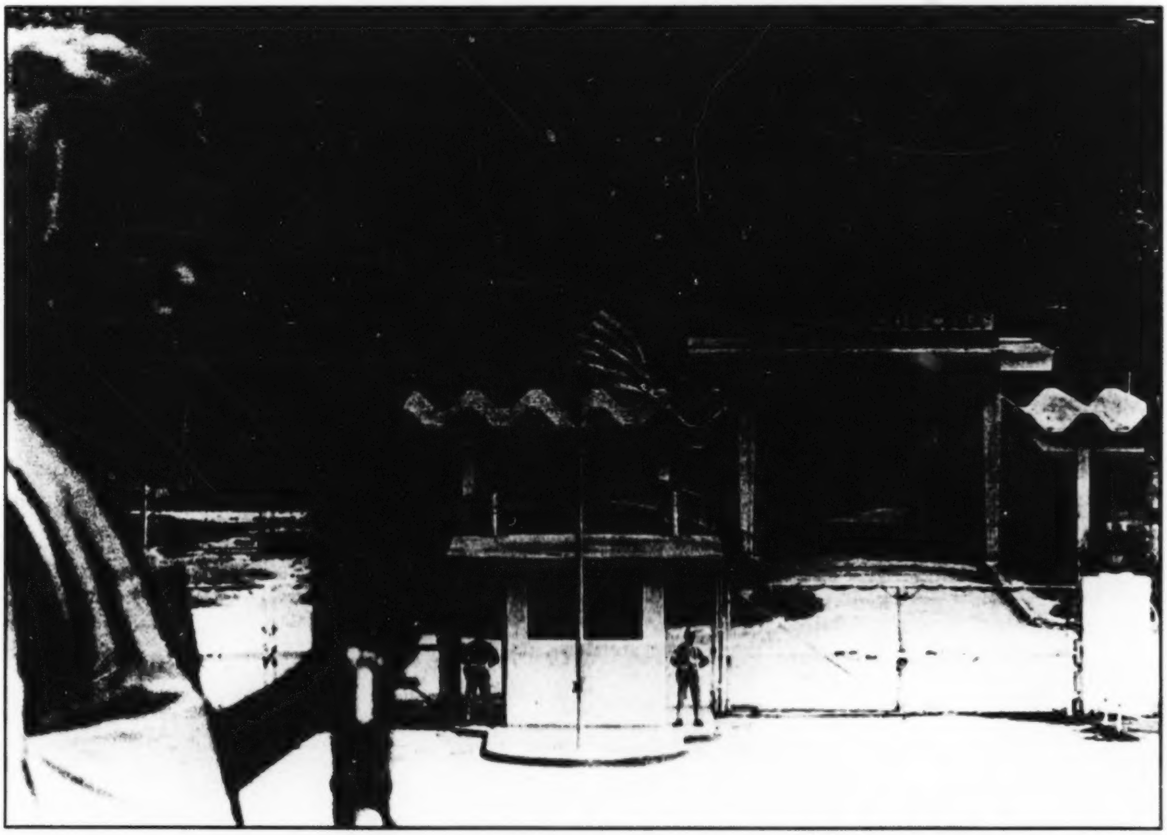
Ines complained about everything--the phones don't work, the electricity goes off, the plumbing is broken. We talked about food shortages, and the long lines to buy food for her kids. And after waiting forty minutes for a bus, Ines got even more agitated. "Boy things are pretty bad here in Cuba," I said innocently. She looked at me in horror, "My mother just had a kidney operation and it didn't cost us a cent," the young woman declared. "How much would an operation like that cost in any other country? Here everything from a kidney operation to bypass surgery is scot-free. Thanks to the revolution my mother is alive. Here in Cuba we may complain 'til we're blue in the face, but when it comes right down to it, our motto is patria o muerte*--my homeland or death."*

This story shows the paradoxical nature of the Cuban economy. On the one hand, Cubans enjoy a higher standard of living than people in most other developing countries. Food is rationed so that few are hungry, health care and education are free, homelessness is rare, and drugs and crime are not major problems. On the other hand, Castro's revolution has not solved Cuba's economic problems and the future does not look promising. Lines for food, clothes, and other consumer goods have been common. Workers receive "moral rewards," rather than pay raises, for doing a good job, and so have little incentive to work hard. The collapse of the communist world now threatens to increase hardship and discontent within Cuba. Some American experts predict that Fidel Castro will not be able to stay in power if Cuba's economic situation gets worse. They believe Cubans will lose faith in the communists because of their inability to provide a higher standard of living. Other experts, however, think that tough economic times will cause Cubans to rally around their leader. They think that abandonment by the Soviet Union, as well as the ongoing U.S. economic embargo, will inspire Cubans to stick together against hostile outsiders.

leaders, in particular, had long backed the alliance with Cuba. Years of cooperation between the two countries had produced strong bonds. Moreover, Moscow operated its largest electronic surveillance station in northwestern Cuba, allowing the Soviets to monitor U.S. military activities. The anti-communist forces, led by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, that gained power after the coup advocated radical changes in foreign policy.

Castro reacted to the decline of Soviet power angrily. From the first days of Gorbachev's reforms, he accused the Soviet leader of betraying the values of socialism and pledged to die fighting in defense of the Cuban revolution. Soviet economic troubles, in particular, hit Castro's government like a punch in the stomach. By the 1980s, more than two-thirds of Cuba's foreign trade was with the Soviet Union. The Cubans relied on the Soviets for oil and grain, while exporting mostly sugar, nickel, and citrus fruits. Soviet trade subsidies supplied the Cubans with billions of dollars in annual aid. Castro was also stung in 1989 by the fall of communist leaders in what was once known as the Soviet bloc[4] of Eastern Europe. These countries had been important economic and military allies for Cuba since Castro came to power.

Confronted with these changes, Cuba's leaders were compelled to alter their own policies. Cuba scrambled to find new trading partners. For example, Cuba increased shipments of sugar to China, and agreed to export a meningitis vaccine to Brazil in exchange for oil. At home, Castro warned the country to prepare for tough times ahead. Since 1986, he has tightened his grip on



U.S. soldiers stand guard at the border separating the naval base at Guantanamo from Cuba. Castro's government has demanded that the United States give up the base. (Historical Association of Southern Florida) the national economy, striving for greater efficiency, while also clamping down on signs of political opposition.

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[4] Countries in the Soviet bloc had close military and economic ties to the USSR. In Eastern Europe following World War II, the Soviets established communist governments that were obedient to Moscow in East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.

Cuba's problems are further complicated by the position of the United States. Cuban leaders had reason for optimism after Cubans and Americans joined in the settlement of the Angolan conflict in 1989. Only months later, though, the United States invaded Panama to remove dictator Manuel Noriega from power. The United States claimed that Castro, Noriega, and Colombian cocaine barons were linked in the international drug trade. With the attack on Panama as evidence of U.S. aggression, Castro alerted his people that Cuba might be the next target for the United States. The success of U.S. forces in crushing the Iraqi army of Saddam Hussein in 1991 only heightened Castro's worries. He has gone so far in recent speeches as to urge his people to prepare for a U.S. assault on Cuba.

Conclusion

Nearly two hundred years of U.S. involvement in the Caribbean and Central America have left a deep impression on both sides. The Caribbean and Central America were among the first areas of the world where the United States began playing a role in international affairs. During the 1800s, U.S. interests in the region focused primarily on territorial expansion. After the success of the Mexican-American War in 1846-48, attention turned to plans for acquiring Cuba and Nicaragua. By the time of the Spanish-American War in 1898, however, economic interests had begun to dominate U.S. foreign policy. That meant using U.S. power to protect the investments and markets of American businesses in the Caribbean and Central America. From 1898 to 1933, U.S. military forces served almost as regional policemen, playing especially important roles in Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

U.S. policy since the 1930s has taken a more diplomatic approach to relations with the Caribbean and Central America. The menace of Nazi Germany and later the threat of the Soviet Union placed the region in the arena of international politics. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress are examples of U.S. efforts to win support in the Caribbean and Central America through negotiation and economic aid. The administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush, however, have set a more assertive tone. U.S. invasions of Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1989 illustrated this shift in policy.

For the countries of the Caribbean and Central America, the presence of their gigantic neighbor to the north has often been overwhelming. This has been particularly true in economic terms. For much of this century, the United States was a partner in roughly two-thirds of the foreign trade conducted by the countries of the region. Large American businesses, such as the United Fruit Company, came to dominate much of the Caribbean and Central America.

In the past few decades, however, the region has broadened its commercial ties. New trade links have been created with Europe, Japan, and other nations within Latin America. Along with greater economic independence has come more flexibility in foreign policy as well. While Cuba under Castro, and Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, openly opposed U.S. interests in the Cold War, other countries in the region sought to expand their own international relations. These developments, however, have in many respects been overshadowed by the economic problems that have gripped much of the Caribbean and Central America since the beginning of the 1980s. Foreign debt and the lack of economic growth have hampered plans to gain a greater voice in world affairs for the countries of the region.

To Think About

1. How did President Reagan change the direction of U.S. foreign policy in the Caribbean and Central America?

2. How have Gorbachev's policies affected Soviet-Cuban relations?

3. What are some of the problems and opportunities facing the countries of the Caribbean and Central America?

Timeline of U.S. Involvement in the Caribbean and Central America

1962--The United States thwarts Soviet attempts to install nuclear missiles in Cuba.

1963--With U.S. support, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras form the Central American Defense Council.

1965--President Lyndon B. Johnson sends 23,000 U.S. troops to the Dominican Republic to combat an attempted overthrow of the pro-U.S. government.

1967--Ernesto Ché Guevara is captured and executed by U.S.-trained Bolivian troops. Guevara's guerrilla army had failed to provoke Cuban-style revolutions in other countries of Latin America.

1970--The Soviet Union stops construction of a submarine base in Cuba after protests from the United States.

1975--Thousands of Cuban troops intervene in Angola to help establish a pro-Soviet regime.

1977--Guatemala rejects U.S. military aid after President Jimmy Carter links the aid to demands for an improvement in Guatemala's human rights record.

1978--The U.S. Senate ratifies a treaty that turns over the Panama Canal to Panama at the end of the century.

1979--The United States condemns the existence of a brigade of Soviet combat troops in Cuba. The resulting controversy helps undermine an arms control agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union.

1979--Cuba applauds the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and sends 2,500 health and education specialists, as well as military advisers, to aid the new government.

1980--More than 125,000 Cubans flee to Florida by sea in the "Mariel exodus."

1981--Under President Ronald Reagan, the United States resumes arms sales to Guatemala, sends military advisers to El Salvador, and ends economic assistance to Nicaragua.

1983--Reagan announces the Caribbean Basin Initiative, designed to boost economic development in the region.

1983--U.S. troops invade the Caribbean island nation of Grenada to remove its pro-Soviet government. Among the casualties are twenty-four Cuban construction workers killed in clashes with U.S. soldiers.

1984--The United States and Cuba sign an immigration agreement which results in the return to Cuba of nearly 3,000 refugees from the Mariel exodus. The United States had charged that Cuban leader Fidel Castro encouraged criminals and asylum patients to join the exodus.

1985--The United States begins broadcasting Radio Martí to Cuba. TV Martí goes on the air five years later.

1985--Reagan declares an economic embargo against Nicaragua and increases support for contra forces fighting against the Sandinistas.

1986--Castro puts an end to more liberal economic policies in Cuba and increasingly criticizes Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts at reform in the Soviet Union.

1987--Costa Rican president Oscar Arias initiates peace negotiations among five Central American countries. As part of the agreement, the Sandinista government pledges to hold free elections in Nicaragua.

1989--Democratic movements in Eastern Europe remove many of Cuba's chief trading partners and military allies from power.

1989--Cuban troops begin to return home from duty in Angola after a peace agreement between the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and South Africa. The last Cubans leave in 1991.

1989--The United States invades Panama to bring down the government of dictator Manuel Noriega. During the conflict, U.S. troops break into the residence of the Cuban ambassador to Panama.

1990--A candidate friendly to the United States, Violeta Chamórro, wins the presidency of Nicaragua in a free election.

1991--The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which oversaw trade relations among the countries of the Soviet bloc since 1949, is dissolved. Cuba had been a member since 1972.

1991--The failure of a coup by hard-line communists in the Soviet Union leads to the fall from power of many supporters of Soviet aid to Cuba.

Chapter 4

U.S. Policy Options in the Caribbean and Central America

Introduction

The last few years have brought momentous changes to international affairs. Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union have been greatly reduced and new democratic governments have emerged in Eastern Europe. The United States led a powerful international coalition to defeat the dictator of Iraq, Saddam Hussein. And the United Nations has gained both influence and prestige in dealing with recent global problems. Some people even suggest that a new world order is coming into existence.

All of these changes have led the United States to an historic juncture in charting its foreign policy. In this chapter, you will consider three possible options for U.S. policy in the Caribbean and Central America. Each option includes a series of proposed actions, and outlines both advantages and disadvantages. Together, these three options should help you develop your own ideas about our relationship with some of our country's closest neighbors. They may also lead you to create a fourth option for U.S. policy.

As Chapter 1 showed, the U.S. role in the world has undergone change throughout the country's history. In the nineteenth century, the upsurge of U.S. power and the threat of European imperialism prompted the United States to play a bigger part in world affairs. In our own century, the conclusion of World War II thrust the United States into the position of global superpower, taking responsibility for defending the free world against Soviet communism. Now, with the assumptions of the Cold War no longer relevant, the United States must once again plot a new course in its relations with other nations.

As the twenty-first century approaches, Americans are exploring a number of different ideas about our country's role. Some believe that the United States should remain a military giant, while others see an opportunity to greatly cut defense spending. The ability of the United States to shape world affairs is also part of the equation. Many Americans consider the spread of democracy and justice a crucial goal for the United States to pursue. Others contend that the United States should seek to maintain order and stability. These issues are tied to questions about our country's mode of action. Should we devote our energies first and foremost to improving the United States or should we try to make the entire world a better place? Should we act alone to carry out our policies or should we join other nations to work cooperatively?

There are no correct responses to these questions. In a representative democracy, however, our answers serve as the foundation for the long-term direction of U.S. foreign policy. Policymakers in Washington make important choices about our country's position in the world every day, but the values guiding their decisions must come from the American public.

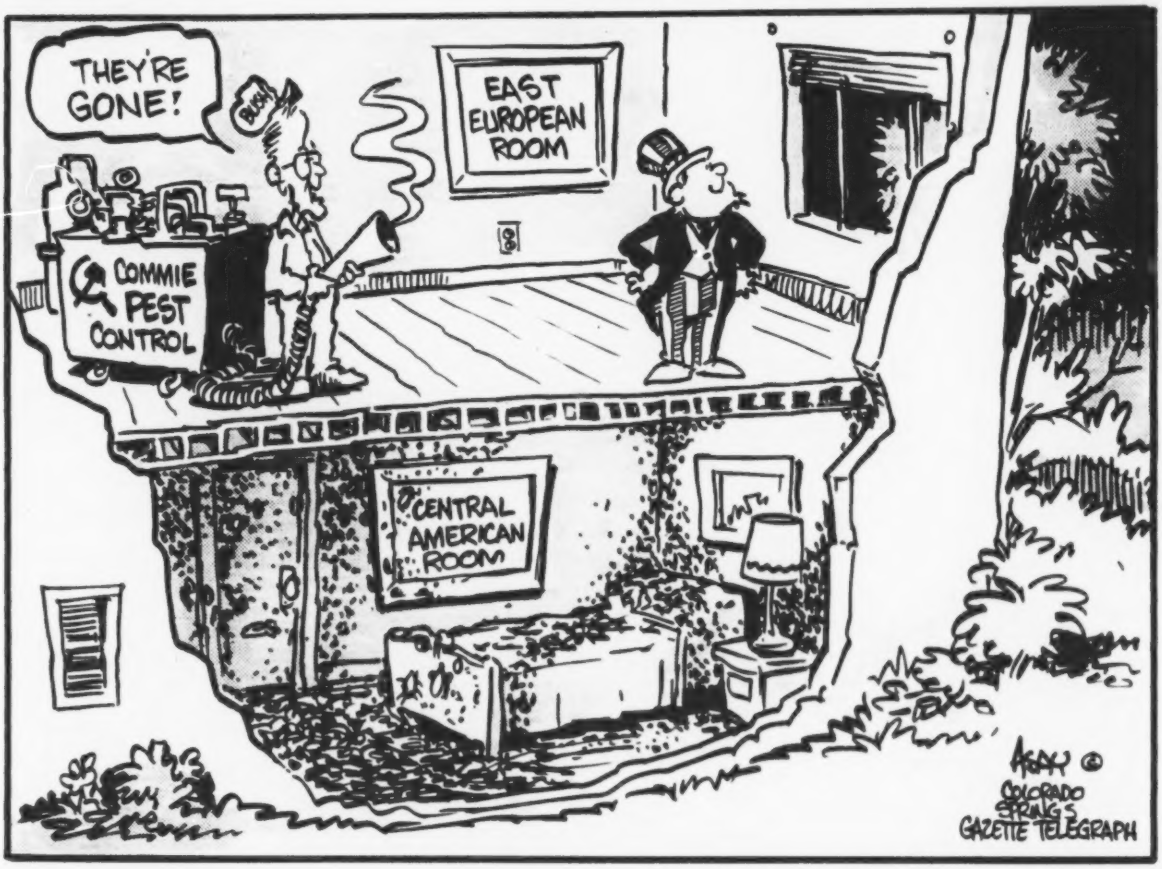
Driving the current debate are the tremendous changes that have recently taken place in our country's international relations. Not every part of the world, however, has been affected by these changes. The goals behind U.S. policies in the Caribbean and Central America, for example, have undergone very little revision in the past few years. In the case of U.S. policies toward Cuba, time has almost stood still since the Cuban missile crisis. Nevertheless, the role the United States decides to pursue in the coming years will indeed have a great impact on our relations with the Caribbean and Central America in general, and Cuba in particular. Without the Soviet Union at the center of our every concern, U.S. leaders are reevaluating our national interests in the region. The Panama Canal, for example, has long been seen as vital to U.S. economic and military security. With the Cold War over, the Soviet threat to the canal has faded as well.

As you learned in Chapter 1, the United States has had a unique relationship with the countries of the Caribbean and Central America. The region has been the site of many of our country's most lasting foreign involvements, and yet many Americans seem to have taken the area for granted. Today, the Caribbean and Central America remain in the background for most Americans. Often, the region is associated with problems: civil war, refugees fleeing violence or poverty, key points in the international drug trade. The mix of instability, illegal immigration, and narcotics is seen as a growing threat to the United States. At the same time, the Caribbean and Central America offer promise and potential. Costa Rica and many of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean are considered models of democracy and order. The expansion of democracy may encourage Americans to view the Caribbean and Central America as an inviting area for trade and investment.

Cuba, of course, represents a special case for the United States. Since Fidel Castro's revolution, the island has been the focus of U.S. attention in the Caribbean and Central America. Castro's communist regime and alliance with the Soviet Union introduced a new element of danger into the U.S. perception of the entire region. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 marked the high point of international tension and set the stage for the suspicion and mistrust that have marred U.S.-Cuban relations since that time. On one side of the dispute, U.S. policymakers contend that Castro is still trying to spark communist revolutions and topple U.S. allies in the Caribbean and Central America. On the other side, Castro insists that the United States remains intent on destroying his revolution and, in recent years, has urged the Cuban people to prepare for a U.S. attack of the island. Meanwhile, radical changes in the Soviet Union have left Moscow in a more distant corner of this tangled triangle. As the Soviets withdraw from their position of global superpower, Cuba must contend with the prospect of losing its major trading partner and chief military ally.

The issue of Cuba lies at the center of the larger discussion of U.S. policy in the Caribbean and Central America. Some Americans think that Cuba should be our country's main concern in the region as long as the island's leadership remains hostile to the United States. Others believe that the poverty and instability of the Caribbean and Central America should be the focus of U.S. policy in the region. Still others see U.S. involvement as a significant part of the problem in the region, and call on American leaders to rethink the role of our country in the Caribbean and Central America. There are many other viewpoints as well, each based on a different set of goals and values regarding the U.S. role in the world.

As you continue to read this chapter, keep in mind that each option represents the views of many Americans who are sincerely concerned about our country's involvement in the Caribbean and Central America. You will find that no option is perfect. Each contains risks and trade-offs. As you form your own opinions, think about what you have learned in previous chapters, and consider the role you want the United States to play in the world.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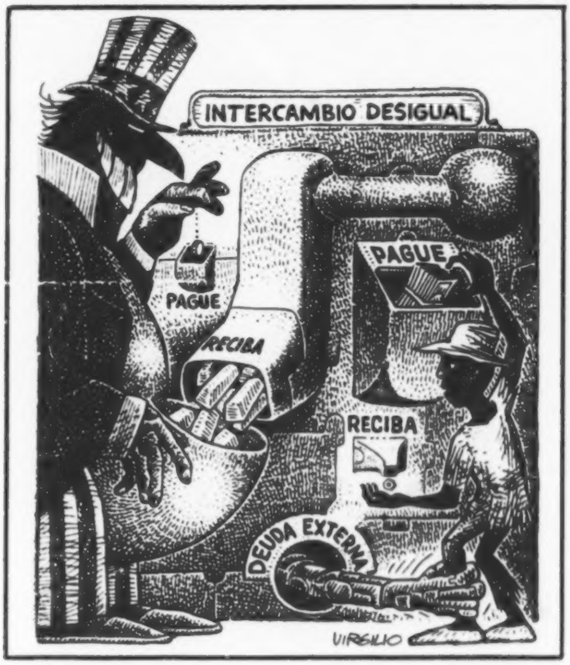
INTERCAMBIO DESIGUAL
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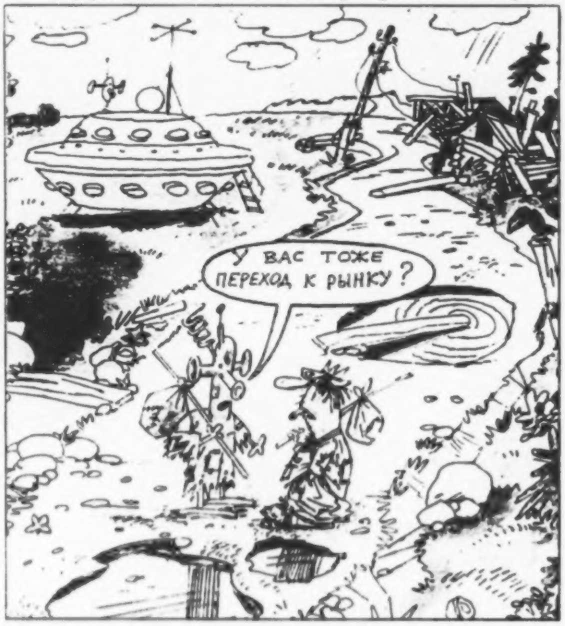
VIRGILIO

Cuba claims that the United States profits from Latin America's foreign debt. (From Cuba's *Granma*)


У ВАС ТОЖЕ ПЕРЕХОД К РЫНКУ?

In the Soviet Union, economic problems have preoccupied the country in recent years. Even a space alien asks, "Are you also moving toward a free market economy?" (From the Soviet Union's *Krokodil*)

Option I

The United States should take a firm stand against threats to stability in the Caribbean and Central America.

As the most powerful nation in the world, the United States has an obligation to serve as the world's policeman. Until the forces of Cuban-led communism are defeated, we must remain vigilant in protecting the security of the Caribbean and Central America, while working to eliminate communism from the region. During the 1980s, we took significant steps in this direction. In 1983, our forces removed a dangerous regime from the island of Grenada, and in 1989 U.S. troops brought down the dictatorship of Panama's Manuel Noriega. The United States should now concentrate on defeating Fidel Castro, the primary source of anti-American activity in the region. For four decades, we were locked in a Cold War with the communist Soviet Union. In the 1980s, our constant pressure finally paid off. Victory over Soviet communism was achieved. Today, only the United States has the power to safeguard international security and control trouble-makers such as Iraq's Saddam Hussein. Now is the time for the United States to strengthen security in our own back yard and put an end to the threat of communism in the Caribbean and Central America once and for all.

Policy Steps

To implement this policy, the United States should take the following steps:

1. Pressure other countries to cut ties to Cuba, especially trade relations.

2. Increase anti-communist propaganda aimed at Cuba through Radio Martí, TV Martí, and other means.

3. Oppose, by military means if necessary, Cuban attempts to incite communist revolutions elsewhere in the Caribbean and Central America.

4. Encourage opponents of Fidel Castro, especially those in the Cuban military, to overthrow the communist dictator.

5. Respond forcefully to the emergence of anti-American regimes in the Caribbean and Central America.

Option I

Arguments in Favor

1. A strong U.S. presence in the Caribbean and Central America would serve as a source of stability in an otherwise unstable part of the world.

2. Ending communism in Cuba would allow the Cuban people to put their country on the path toward economic progress and democracy.

3. Pressuring Castro would limit Cuba's ability to interfere in the affairs of other countries in the Caribbean and Central America.

4. Without Castro's support, communist guerrilla movements in El Salvador and elsewhere in the region would disappear.

5. By taking a firm stand in the Caribbean and Central America, the United States would be better able to control the flow of illegal drugs into our country.

Arguments Against

1. Pressuring Cuba would damage our relations with other countries.

2. Focusing on Castro would draw resources away from the need to strengthen the other countries of the Caribbean and Central America.

3. Pressuring Cuba would give Castro an excuse to blame the United States for his country's problems and crack down on any signs of opposition.

4. An aggressive policy in the Caribbean and Central America would increase the likelihood of our country becoming involved in a war.

Option II

The United States should launch a major economic aid program to promote the development of the Caribbean and Central America.

The democratic institutions and free-market economy of the United States should serve as a model for the Caribbean and Central America. As the richest country in the world, we have both the resources and the obligation to help our neighbors. The United States should attack the root causes of instability and political conflict in the Caribbean and Central America. History has shown that well-spent foreign aid is a wise investment toward the establishment of a stable international order. After World War II, the United States spent billions of dollars rebuilding Western Europe and Japan. These countries now represent some of our closest allies and most important trading partners. With the Cold War against the Soviet Union over, the United States has an opportunity to shift some of our resources to the Caribbean and Central America. Instead of squandering money year after year on military aid, the United States can focus attention on solving the underlying political and economic problems of the region. Providing aid for the development of democratic institutions and economic growth would put the region on the path toward long-term stability.

Policy Steps

To implement this policy, the United States should take the following steps:

1. Provide tens of billions of dollars in economic aid to eligible countries in the Caribbean and Central America.

2. Send U.S. advisers to the region to ensure that U.S. aid is spent productively.

3. Require countries wishing to participate in the aid program, including Cuba, to follow free-market economic principles and join the United States in creating a regional free-trade association.

4. Require countries wishing to participate in the aid program, including Cuba, to guarantee their citizens basic democratic rights.

5. Impose an arms embargo on countries in the Caribbean and Central America that do not promote free-market principles and democratic values.

Option II

Arguments in Favor

1. As the recovery of Western Europe and Japan after World War II proved, the creation of prosperous, free-market democracies would bring peace and stability to the Caribbean and Central America.

2. A prosperous, democratic Caribbean and Central America would allow the United States to reduce military aid to the region in the long run.

3. By invigorating the economies of the Caribbean and Central America, the United States would persuade people of the region that the American way is far superior to Cuban communism.

4. By invigorating the economies of the Caribbean and Central America, the United States would create new opportunities for trade and investment.

5. The flow of refugees from the Caribbean and Central America to the United States would be reduced if the region became more prosperous and democratic.

6. Castro would be compelled either to accept democratic reforms or be faced with increasing pressure from his own people eager to take part in the new prosperity of the region.

Arguments Against

1. Spending billions of dollars in foreign aid at a time when our own government is deep in debt would hurt the American economy.

2. Pouring money into the Caribbean and Central America would make the countries of the region more dependent on foreign aid.

3. Trying to build democratic institutions in the Caribbean and Central America would create instability in countries that have no tradition of democracy.

4. Economic aid to the Caribbean and Central America would not eliminate the threat of communist Cuba.

Option III

The United States should reduce its involvement in the Caribbean and Central America and encourage countries of the region to solve their own problems.

The United States has no reason to continue its long history of meddling in the affairs of the Caribbean and Central America. We should reduce our role in the region and normalize relations with Cuba. From the standpoint of history, U.S. involvement in the Caribbean and Central America has done little good either for the United States or the countries of the region. In this century, we have poured billions of dollars into the region to protect our national security and create stable democratic governments. By most accounts, our money has been wasted. The people of the region still live very poorly, while most governments of the area have failed to support democracy. At the same time, more than three decades of hostility toward Cuba have produced a bitter stalemate and hurt our relations with other countries. Today, we have an opportunity to set a new course. Without the threat of the Soviet Union facing us, the military and strategic importance of the Caribbean and Central America to the United States has decreased. If we reduced our involvement in the region, the people of the Caribbean and Central America would have a chance to tackle their own problems with their own talents.

Policy Steps

To implement this policy, the United States should take the following steps:

1. End military aid to countries in the Caribbean and Central America.

2. Greatly reduce economic aid to countries in the Caribbean and Central America.

3. Reestablish normal economic and diplomatic relations with Cuba.

4. Promote the establishment of a regional organization to focus on the problems of the Caribbean and Central America, such as drug trafficking and the civil war in El Salvador.

5. Persuade our allies in the developed world to play a greater role in assisting countries in the Caribbean and Central America.

Option III

Arguments in Favor

1. By ending military aid to the Caribbean and Central America, governments in the region would negotiate with their opponents at home rather than use force against them.

2. Reduced involvement in the Caribbean and Central America would save the United States billions of dollars at a time when our own government is deep in debt.

3. Reduced involvement in the Caribbean and Central America would help erase the anti-American feelings that have resulted from our country's long history of intervention in the region.

4. The Cuban issue would once and for all be removed as a sore point in U.S. relations with other countries.

5. Without the United States dominating international affairs in the Caribbean and Central America, the countries of the region would cooperate more closely in resolving disputes among themselves.

6. Castro would allow the Cuban people more freedom if he felt that the United States were no longer threatening to destroy his regime.

Arguments Against

1. Reducing our presence in the Caribbean and Central America would leave a power vacuum in the region that could be filled by countries hostile to the United States.

2. Reducing U.S. aid to the Caribbean and Central America would worsen poverty in the region and lead to greater instability.

3. Cutting back our involvement in the Caribbean and Central America and normalizing relations with Cuba would strengthen Castro and encourage him to step up communist activities in the region.

4. Without a strong U.S. presence in the Caribbean and Central America, the United States would be unable to control the flow of refugees and drugs from the region into the country.

In the Shadow of the Cold War: The Caribbean and Central America in U.S. Foreign Policy unravels the tangled web of economic, strategic, political, and historical forces that have framed U.S. involvement in the Caribbean and Central America. This two-week supplemental curriculum incorporates ground-breaking research on the Cuban missile crisis in exploring the contrasting perspectives of the three countries involved in the conflict. The unit also provides a broad historical overview of U.S. relations with the Caribbean and Central America from the 1800s to the present. The concluding chapter of the book invites readers to weigh three options for the future of U.S. foreign policy in the region.